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The Change in Erica

Or, A Love Story of Finland

By De Lysle Ferree Cass

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CHAPTER I.

OLD NILS and Sven had been the closest comrades since boyhood days. As children they had baited their squirrel and fox traps together; as youths they had together made their livelihood in the herring fisheries off Hieronymo Head. They became known all over the district as the greatest inseparables. People came to speak of them as one says pepper and salt, David and Jonathan, or Castor and Pollux. They lived in the same little house, ate at the same table, shared the gains of their hard daily labor in common, even maintained a communion of thought. Later they fell in love with the same girl, and that was the cause of the first and only estrangement in their simple lives.

She was Hilda, the only daughter of old Lars Gustaveen, who farmed barley, oats and potatoes in a small way near Bothamo. Her mother was Swedish born and had been much admired in her youth. It was from her that Hilda inherited her good looks.

Old Nils (though they did not call him "old" in those days) had won the girl, and by so doing lost his lifelong friend. Sven disappeared from the neighborhood and lived in solitary bitterness, far to the north on the bleak shores of Lake Enare, where he trapped bears, lynx and wolves, and sold their pelts to furriers in the towns. After a while, though, the terrible loneliness of the place crushed him, and a longing to see his old friend again became irresistible. He reappeared in the village of his youth and visited Nils and Hilda in their home. He envied them their happiness and said:

"How I wish that I were well settled as you are!"

Hilda said: "There is Freda Haraldson, my girlhood chum. Maybe she would have you."

"I will ask her," exclaimed Sven.

He did so, and soon those two also established themselves in a little house near that where Nils and Hilda lived. The old friends became reconciled again, and their mutual affections were knit closer than ever by the temporary ill-feeling between them.

In time children were born to them. Hilda's baby they named Erica, after its grandfather, and Sven's boy they called Van, in honor of the apostle of that name. They thought that the infants were the finest in all Finland. On the day of their christening, both families dined together at Nils' house. It was the occasion of a great celebration with them. They ate with astounding appetites and a great quantity of thin beer was drunk—especially by the men. All of the people in the neighborhood were invited in to partake of the happy fathers' hospitality.

"It is almost like another bridal," said Nils to Sven, who stood close beside him, watching the merrymaking.

Sven started, and a sudden idea took shape in his head. His eyes followed the buxom Hilda as she hurried among the guests seeing that all their plates and mugs were replenished. She was more solid and matronly now than when first he and Nils had quarreled over her, but that thought was not in Sven's

mind. He took his old comrade aside and whispered cautiously in his ear. He was excited, which was a rare thing with Sven.

"Old friend," said he, speaking fast as if afraid that some one would come up and interrupt him, "each of us has a sturdy youngster now."

"Yes," answered Nils slowly. "Tell me what is on your mind, good comrade."

Sven puffed strongly on his black pipe before answering. He was rather reluctant to open the old wound.

"Long ago we both wanted Hilda there," he said finally.

"She is as fine as ever again, now," cried Nils, a cloud coming over his brow as he thought of how his friend had lived alone in the white wilderness of the Northland. "You, too, are happy nowadays with Freda, your wife. You also have a son who will grow up to be strong and industrious like you."

"That is just it," said Sven. "He will grow up to be like me, and can be then help loving Hilda's daughter? I could not bear to think of him disappointed too."

Nils slapped his knee a resounding clap with his horny hand. "I get your thought, old friend," he cried, pleasure illuminating his weather-beaten face. "You would propose that the children marry each other when they are old enough. It is a good idea; it will grow green grass on the graves of the past. Your Yan shall have our Erica."

The old comrades gripped hard on each other's hands with unaccustomed tears in their eyes. They felt that now nothing could disturb the friendly quality of their friendship any more. And so the affair was settled.

CHAPTER II.

YOUNG YAN grew up to be a hardy, serious youth, much resembling his father. Hard work made him very strong. Broad-shouldered and deep in the chest, he combined the agility of the neighborhood began to make sheep's eyes at him, saying: "Maybe he will not marry old Nils' daughter after all."

Little Erica blossomed into the image of her lovely mother. She was unlike any other of the neighborhood girls. Her Swedish blood gave her a more fair complexion that was like the sunset reflected in snow. Her features were serously molded in long, flowing lines that gave evidence of strength as well as grace. Her golden hair was like sunshining between the reddest and most distracting tips in Finland. She had a smile that would melt the heart of stone and, in comparison with the other girls of the vicinity, her hair was like pure gold to the valley of black rocks. It framed the freshness of her face in a glory all its own. In stature she was taller and more slender than those regions are. Yan, even, was somewhat shorter than she, though he did not like to be reminded of the fact.

It was an understood thing between the two that they were destined for each other. Their early betrothal had been impressed constantly upon them since infancy. At times Erica's mother would pass her hand over the girl's head and say:

"You are blooming forth, daughter, and soon the morning dew will be eyes of the youths of the neighborhood. It will soon be time for young Yan Svenson to come and say from me and make you happy in his way." Whereat Erica would blush furiously and hang her head in confusion. Sometimes, too, she would throw her arms around her mother's neck sobbing: "Ah! I do not want to have you—to."

Again, old Sven would talk with his son before the roaring fire in the evening after the day's work was done. "Well, Yan," he would say, pulling reflectively on the black pipe that had been his only companion for decades on the barren shores of Lake Enare. "Well, Yan, you are grown to be a man now. You must lift an axe as I could at your age, but you are well enough as it is. Oh, yes! you could support a wife! I see that that's waiting for you—oh, you rascal! There is not another like her in Finland, let me tell you. I'll be a grandidad before I know it, I suppose."

Remarks like these made young Yan tighten the muscles in his sturdy bull-like neck as if to assure himself of his own strength. Such comments pleased him, though he never responded to them, as he was a youth of few words. Nevertheless, old Sven understood his reticence. His mild silence was as expressive as any outburst of passionate rhapsody could have been. Yan was not given to stirring his emotions—not even to Erica. Before the placid depths of her blue eyes he was invariably abashed, and withdrew further within himself than ever. To talk with her of anything other than the prosaic things of life was totally beyond him. A kind of self-shame kept him silent. They rarely spoke to each other of the time when they would marry.

As his father had done before him, Yan followed the life of a herring fisherman off Ulleaborg Head, where great schools of fish came to spawn. He had a sloop, decked all over, and with tar and pitch, and rigged with a mast and sail. The vessel was broad-bottomed and tubby in appearance, but it rode the water, feather-like, in even the roughest weather, and was light enough for one to propel it with the long oars that were always kept lashed to its sides.

Ordinarily Yan would embark before daylight with his nets, and by the time the fog had lifted would be well out on the fiord and on the open sea where the fishermen were. Here he would let down three nets at a time, attaching them to the gunwale of the boat by means of iron hooks. When he felt the craft tipping strongly to one side or the other he would know that the net on that side was full, and would haul in the catch with a great straining of the muscles of his huge arms and back. His exertions were such that he was continually bathed in perspiration so that he hardly felt the cold easterly winds. By sundown he would generally have the boat full of fish and, if there was not enough with which to fill it, would row, bending his back almost double and taking long, rhythmical strokes that made the muscles of his huge arms and back. Yan was usually ashore again before the evening mist settled over the water. Old Sven always awaited him at the fiord landing with huge baskets, in which they dumped the day's catch. Leather aprons protected them as they abled them to be swung across the back, and thus carried up to the house, where Dame Freda and Erica prepared the big supper ready for them. This meal was customarily eaten in silence, save for the occasional remarks of Sven in praise of the hungry men. The time for conversation was afterwards, when they could stretch themselves and the feet before the crackling log and feel the generous glow circulate through their veins. Then Freda, thick frost that gathered on the window-panes would only make their comfort the more palpable.

Erica did housewife duty, helping her mother with the meals and in the dairy, where they ran tallow candles in pewter iron molds, made cheese and churned butter for sale in the village on market days. Also she attended to the feeding of the chickens, the cows and the pigs and, in the summer time, helped garner the apples and cherries in their little orchard. Of nights, when her mother would knit long woolen stockings, which brought a good price from the farmers' wives of the neighborhood. Old Nils would sit smoking as they plied the needles, sometimes telling stories of the sagas or reading passages from the well-thumbed copy of the Bible, which represented the house library. Sometimes he walked three miles across the marshes to the little Lutheran church, where the village mass was held and where the village youths congregated in their holiday clothes to flirt with the maidens or exchange the gossip of the past week. At such times Erica came in for more than her share of admiration, though she rarely failed left the girl with whom he had been laughing to run and say good day to old Nils' pretty daughter.

On Saturday, which was market day, it was Erica's duty to carry the eggs and dairy produce to the village, and there barter it for a basket of food-stuffs upon which the family were to live through the succeeding week. On sometimes, too, she would take more produce to town than it was necessary to exchange for, and then she would be paid for her butter, cheese, or eggs, as the case might be, in cash. She would carry the coins home along the lonely road, tied in her silk neckerchief, but she never considered the relative robbers, since she was a strong girl and well able to defend herself.

Once young Henryk, the village notary's son, who prided himself upon being something of a heartbreaker among the girls of the neighborhood, had offered to accompany her part way home—"for protection's sake," as he said. As the road was really rather eerie at dusk when all of Erica's purchases were made, she had let him go in little wondering, but when his arm slipped easily around her waist, she had fetched him so stinging a slap across the face that he let her go the rest of the way alone. Erica was too ashamed of the incident ever to mention it at home or else the gallant Henryk would have gotten the trouncing of his life when Yan heard of it. But though the notary's son never bothered her again, he did not forget the ignominy of the treatment she had given him.

"Some day, my fine girl, I'll humble you," he muttered to himself, and kept looking out for some scandal that he could fasten upon her.

It was one Saturday late in summer when the night frosts had been particularly heavy and cold, even in daytime had a sting to it that brought the red into one's face and made people put on their mufflers and mittens. But Erica met Yan in the village market-place. The young fisherman had come there at the first streaks of dawning of his weekly catch of salt herring, which same he had sold at a good profit. He would generally allow himself a little relaxation at the tavern, had he not caught sight of Erica trudging by in her own direction. Her basket of foodstuffs slung across her back. Yan noticed that she looked remarkably pretty that day. Her cheeks, as she did, her colored silk scarf and even shoes and stockings, though it was not Sunday. A jealous pang made him ask himself whether she thus put on her best clothes in order to attract the admiration of the young farmers who gathered in town on market day, but, seeing that she looked neither to right nor left at them, he dismissed the discarded notion and was heartily ashamed of himself. He hurried after her, calling: "Erica!"

The girl paused and turned on hearing her name called so unexpectedly and, when she saw who her companion was, blushed. "Oh!" said she, speaking with herself that she could not the better conceal her confusion, "Is it you, Yan?"

The young fisherman was as abashed as she, only the telltale blood did not glower on his cheeks to betray the tanned face. "Will you let me carry the basket home for you?" he stammered. "I have been so fortunate with the fishing I am able to see you as much as I should."

Now this was an old and most irritating excuse of his. He was always busy—even of nights when he did not fish, it seemed. The girl, though as modest a maid as ever lived, would have preferred a more ardent wooer—one who, at least, would not accept their engagement with stolidness. Of course they would marry each other eventually. That had already been settled long before, but she wanted to be wooed, not simply taken. She would not have admitted it even to herself, but she longed to respond to sundry little tendernesses that Yan never seemed to give her. The female countryside said: "Yan Svenson is Erica's lover," but he never had shown any signs of it to her. The girl was literally hungry for some little proofs. She was afraid she might be married to him before any were forthcoming, and she wanted to know (before that time arrived) that she would be secure in the keeping as well as his house. She refused to believe that all men acted thus towards their sweethearts, intuitively she knew that they did not. However, she would not have spoken to him about it for worlds.

Erica and Yan walked homewards through the rapidly falling dusk side by side. The girl wondered why he could find little to say to her, though he groped desperately for words. In a vague way he felt her provocation and it befuddled him the more. He was of too serious a nature to think of a frivolous form of flirtation, so he began to talk about how many fish he had netted that week, how his father's rheumatism was worse since the heavy frosts set in, and how Mother Freda was constantly nagging him to marry. "She does want us to hurry it over with," said he.

Erica flushed hotly in the twilight and walked on with never a word in answer to his remark. She was furious with him—wished that the way home was long so that she could more quickly let flow the angry tears that choked her.

"Will he never understand?" she thought. "How can a man be so stupid?"

Yan all the while was wondering what was the matter with her and why the girl would not take an interest in his news. He was not aware that she expected of him, but he could not make out what it was. So he trudged along sullenly by her side.

The evening was raw and damp, and the road back to the cottages by the Ulesboro Fiord was lonely. Only a sled across bleak fens where the ground was spongy underfoot and the water pooled here and there in the ruts. Such trees as were visible lifted leafless skeleton branches against the low-lying skies, and the hoarse and lonely caws of a crow could be heard and the discordant cries of a flock of wild geese flying southward in the distance.

Violent gusts of cold wind tossed and bellied Erica's skirt, making walking the more difficult. They also took her hair escaped from under her cap and blew about her face. The sting of the air brought the color to her face till her cheeks and made her eyes sparkle. Yan saw all out of the corner of his eye, but was afraid to look directly at her and say the pretty little things that would have pleased her. His practical mind should only one sign worth commenting on.

"We are going to get caught in the rain," he said, looking at the sky.

However, the heavy basket on his shoulder would not permit of a very rapid pace, and the wind took the girl's

Hail began to fall with the sleet and cut their faces. Yan waited no longer. Scoundrel or not, her protestations and first half-hearted efforts at resistance, he picked the girl up in his arms and waded gingerly out into the raging flood. He spread-his short massive legs far apart the better to resist the rush of the waters and kept his eyes fixed on the farther shore. The wind screamed furiously in his ears and the darkness and the sweat that started out on his face warmed that of Erica pressed close against it.

Luckily the farther shore was not far distant, or it is to be doubted whether or not Yan could have borne the strain. He reached it and stood there panting for a moment, still holding the girl in his embrace. Would she struggle? Would tenderness move him? Erica wondered. Half she hoped so; half she dreaded it. The anticipated caress was not forthcoming. With a long sigh Yan set her gently on her feet again, and for Erica cold herself that she hated him. The fisherman gave her little time for thought, though.

"Come, we must hurry, or our ears and noses will be frozen!" he cried. "I can see the lights of the house over there."

So they stumbled on, Erica's mind a blank except for the one thought that recurred like the motif in the chaos of a Wagnerian opera: "He has no heart in him; he does not know how to love; he would not even kiss me when he held me close!"

Ahead of them, a pair of gleaming eyes pierced through the misery of the storm. They made towards them with seemingly renewed strength. The briny smell of the sea came tingling to their nostrils, and soon they could even hear the breakers dashing against the bases of the cliffs. Houses loomed up suddenly through the gloom before them—rough, stone-built cottages that were green with age and that had withstood the fury of the east wind for decades. The first house to which they came was built-in-tiers; a flickering candle had been placed in the window of the house further on, and even the howling wind could not drown the sounds of merriment going on within.

"Ah!" said Yan, slowly, as if puzzled. "My folks are all over visiting with yours, Erica. I might as well go into the house along with you."

Impatience with her would lower filled the girl. "Do not come if you feel that there is anything for you to do elsewhere," she said, stamping her bare foot upon the ground. "I would not force you to come and see me."

Yan was mildly astonished at the passion of her outburst. He felt hurt, too, in a way. "Why are you angry with me, Erica?" he asked, forgetting that they were standing facing each other out in the driving rain. But the girl was oblivious to the fact also.

He had asked her why she was angry with him. Should she open her heart, speak freely and tell him the reason? No, no! she felt that she could not do that! It would be immodest, unmaidenly. Illness filled her soul as she answered him.

"Am I angry with you, Yan? Do not worry over me. Such a circumstance will not prevent our marriage, I trow," and she laughed in a wild way that, for the moment, startled him.

It had the outhanging latchstring and they were blown into the big warm room with a rush of sleet and wet. The wind slammed the heavy oaken door shut behind them with a crash that brought a chorus of voices greeting around the open fire to their feet. Every eye became fixed on the bedraggled couple at the door.

"It is Yan!" exclaimed old Sven and Freda in amazement.

"It is Erica," ejaculated old Nils and Hilda with relief.

"Yes, it is we," the young fisherman rejoined. "We are glad to get back here. That is a bad storm outside there."

The girl said nothing, but went dutifully to kiss her grandfather and shook out her clinging skirts to wring the water out of them.

"Erica," her father sharply, "What do you do, daughter! Do you not see that we have a guest?"

The girl dropped the folds of her skirts abruptly with a crimsoned face that could have been attributed to her exertion to the glow of the fireplace upon it, though neither of those was the cause of it. She glanced swiftly, half furtively, at the tall figure that had hitherto been shrouded by the shadows of the inglenook. As she looked, the vivid coloring of her cheeks spread to her ears, throat and the roots of her hair. Her confusion was almost comical to see.

The stranger stepped forward more into the glare of the firelight and bowed deeply to the girl—too deeply, Yan thought. He disliked strangers, anyway. He could not comprehend why they should leave their own houses to go about intruding upon the home life of others. But he was suspicious of this stranger in particular. He was annoyed that Erica should blush so before him. Yan could see no reason for that.

Old Nils had introduced the guest to his daughter. "Erica, this is the noble Pan Andreas Gresham, a gentleman from England, who is cruising hereabouts for his health. It is to the storm that we are indebted for his company, since it prevented his finding his way back to his yacht down on the fiord. Pan Andreas, this is my daughter, Erica, and a finer is not known to me in Finland."

"Praise a jewel for thieves to steal it!" thought Yan to himself, quoting the old proverb. He wanted to efface himself entirely from the scene, but this old Sven would not hear of. He pushed him also into the light, saying:

"And this, Pan Andreas, is my son Yan, who is Erica's betrothed."

Sir Andrew Gresham favored the young fisherman likewise with a bow, and extended his hand to him in English fashion.

"I am pleased to make your acquaintance, sir," he said in a singularly deep and mellow voice.

Yan made a surly response to this overture, and turned away. Never had he seemed more obstinate and boorish in Erica's eyes. She remarked the slight flush that momentarily stained the pallor of their guest's face and tried to dissipate the sudden embarrassment that had fallen upon all present by a friendly smile. Now, when Erica smiled, gloom always fled. The stranger's brow became serene again and conversation was resumed with even greater vivacity than before. Erica put their guest more at his ease, Erica pulled his chair a little nearer the fire and thanked him for the consideration by the courtliest gesture that had ever been given her. The kindly reader will believe that when another of those radiant smiles, which were the joy of all who knew her, and longed to help her in her mother in preparing the evening meal.

If the fare was unpretentious it was at least prepared with care, for the Swedish-born can cook fi, and served upon a spotlessly clean tablecloth. Erica wished to assist old Hilda in waiting on their guests, but this none of the old folks would hear to.

"No, no!" cried old Nils in bluff heartiness. "Sit you down, daughter, there beside your young man, as a good sweetheart should. The dame, here, knows how to keep our plates filled well enough. Fall to, Pan Andreas, and pray excuse the simplicity of what we have to offer you, since you are probably used to better."

The meal progressed merrily. Knives and forks rattled against pewter plates and the hard cider of old Nils' own pressing loosened up the tongues. The country folks ate heartily, unaffectedly ravenous. They conveyed chunks of meat and potatoes to their mouths on the points of their knives and imbibed their soup with a sucking sound. Jaws cracked in labor, jests were told and loud laughter filled the big room.

Erica could not help being self-conscious in the presence of the handsome gentleman from overseas. She watched furtively how daintily he ate and how considerate he seemed to be of all the things transpiring that must have jarred upon his finer sensibilities. A kind of honest shame at her relatives' manners came over her, and she tried to emulate Sir Andrew's mode of eating. She had never seen any one so elegant.

"Will you let me carry the basket?"

His proprietary interest in Erica before the stranger whom he perceived she admired. He looked at the girl for some sign of encouragement, but seeing none, hesitated. The table, however, was now in an uproar, urging him on to the deed, so his resolution hardened with the increased volume of noise. Erica sat very still with her eyes cast down.

"What, Yan, are you afraid of your own betrothed, that you blush?" she cried. "I warn't that way in my young days, was I goodwife?"

The fair-haired maiden stolid Yan to the quick. "I am not afraid," he answered, and leaning quickly over the girl seated beside him, he attempted a clumsy caress. Blushing painfully to think that the elegant stranger should be the witness to such an act of affection, she moved her head sidewise to elude her lover and his lips only touched the side of her ear.

"Ho! ho! She is too sharp for you, lad; you did not get by her that!" they laughed at the unnaturally excited fisherman. "You are too slow for the girl!"

Yan took their jibes coolly. "There will be plenty of time hereafter for me to taste her lips," he said, with a ponderous attempt at wit. "Why need one hurry matters?"

The words were hathos to rosy Erica. Tears overflowed her blue eyes and she hid her face in her apron so that the stranger should not see her weeping. A profound silence fell upon the company, who looked at each other in wonder, as if to say: "What is the occasion of all this fuss about nothing? What is the matter with the girl?" Yan hung his head shamefacedly, sincerely repentant for the unwonted part he had played. He had not meant to hurt Erica's feelings. Sir Andrew arose, pushing back his chair and pulling down his waistcoat.

"I think that the storm has abated," he said in his singularly well modulated voice. "If one of you good people will light me to the edge of the fiord with a lantern, I will be able to signal my boat to send the yawl ashore for me."

"I will accompany you down to the shore," said Yan, reaching for his oilskins.

"That will be a concluding act of hospitality on your part," protested the Englishman, with his grave smile, and, turning, took leave of the old folks ceremoniously in such a pleasant way that they felt no embarrassment, but rather a kind of regret at having him leave them. Erica dried her eyes upon her apron and gave Sir Andrew her hand unaffectedly—the depths of her blue eyes shining through the mist of tears like the surface of the sea after a storm.

"Good-by, and may the kind God keep you," said she, which is the customary formula at leave-taking in those parts. The Englishman was strangely touched by the quaintness of her phraseology.

"May He have you, too, in His keeping," Sir Andrew responded, with an earnestness that made the girl's eyes open wide. "Good-by, Erica."

"Good-by," she stammered, in sudden shyness, and retreated hastily behind her mother's portly figure.

Yan, lantern in hand, ushered their guest out into the night.

CHAPTER III.

IT HAD been some eighteen years before that Sir Andrew Gresham, then not long out of Oxford, had led his fair young bride to the palatial house in Mayfair. A year later, with tear-stained face, he had closed her tender eyes for the last long sleep and, with the help of a plaintive wailing of the babe whose chubby pink fingers yet played over the inanimate face that had loved so well. Thereafter the man existed only for the child whom he named after the wife he had wedded upon it with a reverence that was almost devotional. Never was there greater love than developed between father and daughter. Her inherent delicacy of health but tightened the bonds of love more. Yearly she trembled on his dead wife more, but yearly also her vitality decreased. Sir Andrew took her to the continent, and great doctors of the French and Austrian baths did all that science could to preserve her life. All in vain! Little and she, too, was laid in the great vault of the Greshams. All the sunlight seemed gone out of Sir Andrew's life.

The thought of a second marriage was repulsive to him. To him, the cultured one, the most sacred things his memory held. He wandered over Europe in despair—aimlessly, like a man out of his mind. "Come back to England," they wrote him. "Return and spend the season in London. Maybe that will help you to forget."

As if Sir Andrew ever wanted to forget those who had been so dear to him! Yet he went back, revisited the scenes hallowed by the reminiscences of past happiness and finally plunged into the gay life of a social season at the capital. He appeared regularly at his clubs again for the first time in years; he bought a box at the Italian opera and tried to interest himself somewhat in the politics of his borough. But all for

(Continued on page eleven.)

Aaron Lapwing's Genius

Or, For the Princess Herodias

By Leonard Britten

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CHAPTER IV.

ALL AT SEA.

THE sound of lapping waves, the sense of an unbearable headache, a bitter taste in the mouth and a thirst for which he would have given untold wealth at present, and Roddy opened his eyes. He had awakened in a cabin

in a swiftly moving vessel. It was a tiny cabin, and evidently a tiny ship, for, though he could see through an open porthole before his eyes that the sea was calm and blue, the ship was pitching and rolling considerably.

Roddy lay still, too utterly fatigued to stir. But his mind was fully alert, and he had already begun to look back through all the scenes of his adventures up to the moment of the hypodermic and the present white surroundings.

For some mysterious reason his presence was evidently necessary to that gorgeous, wonderful Princess. He could not imagine. He had already abandoned the theory that Lapwing was endeavoring to pay off the debt of his life's fire. Yet somehow he was convinced that Lapwing had lit the blaze with some purpose in view. The only thing Lapwing was the sort of man who would kindle a million-dollar conflagration to boil a pot of coffee. Nothing like that Lapwing did would surprise anybody who knew him.

Yet Roddy could not believe that the man would go to the length of kidnaping him in order to prevent a harmless story from appearing in the newspaper. The man's mentality was sound and shrewd enough, and he had the perspicacity of mind to be thoughtful and not without the sense of perspective, which accounted both for his colossal successes and for his colossal failures.

As Roddy lay there, the door opened softly, and a girl came in. It was not Herodias. Much as he was attracted by the beautiful Princess, he breathed an involuntary sigh of relief for that. A little Herodias was like the forcemeat ball next to mutton, but Herodias all the time was a fiery proposition.

This was not the Princess, and Roddy's eyes grew large with wonder. For this could only be an English girl, and she was one of the most beautiful girls that Roddy had ever seen.

She looked about twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, was tall and slim, simply and yet quite effectively in a white skirt and a sailor blouse. Her hair was fair, her eyes were gray and kind. Instantly Roddy felt that he could use up a lot of kindness at that moment. She came forward with a quick but graceful step, which reminded Roddy of the walk of a professional nurse, and laid a cool hand upon his burning forehead.

"You poor, unfortunate man! Are you feeling better now?" she asked.

"I feel pretty well," groaned Roddy, as he tried to sit up in his bunk.

The girl's hand, developing unexpected muscular power, restrained him. Roddy groaned again. The muscles of his back seemed to have been strung on incandescent wire.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"You are on board Mr. Aaron Lapwing's private yacht," answered the girl.

"Then I want you to do me a favor," answered Roddy. "I want you to bring Mr. Lapwing here. I have an appointment with him at the earliest possible moment, and I want to get it over."

The flicker of a smile came upon the girl's face.

"Now, you mustn't talk like that, or I have those revengeful Herodias," she said. "Mr. Lapwing is your best friend."

"He is, eh? Then show me my worst. He'd be a curiosity," said Roddy.

"You see," the girl continued, "you have been lying in your stupor for three days and nights now."

"My stupor!" groaned Roddy. "It isn't mine. Lapwing gave it to me."

"Now, Mr. Roddy," demonstrated the girl, "you must have kinder thoughts toward those who are only seeking your good. Mr. Lapwing knew that, when he was away, you would have no one to restrain you from your debaucheries. You had been drinking a great deal more than was good for you, and as he was taking Prince Herod and the Princess back to Albania on his yacht, and myself, too, he brought you along to keep you from the dreadful temptation of drinking."

"You were quite unconscious when you were carried aboard," the girl continued. "We were afraid you would suddenly become violent, and we put your clothes in that cupboard, for fear you would find them and dress, and throw yourself into the sea. But you seem much better, Mr. Nicholson, and I am sure the excursion will be a lesson to you. It is very sad in such a young man!"

"Go on!" groaned Roddy. "That sounds exactly like Lapwing. But what beats me," he continued, "is why Aaron should have selected me for this practical joke. I haven't any interests in Albania. I don't even know where Albania is, except it's somewhere around Adrianople and Philippopolis, if my memory of the school geography runs truly."

"Mr. Nicholson," said the girl severely, "do you mean to say that this is a joke on Mr. Lapwing's part and that you are not a victim of the liquor habit?"

"I never touch it," said Roddy, not quite correctly.

"Then how did you come to be brought aboard Mr. Lapwing's yacht unconscious?"

"I don't know," Roddy answered, "but it feels like morphine. They gave it to me once before, after I had my appendix taken out."

Roddy saw the girl look dubiously at him, and hastened to follow up his advantage.

"Suppose you tell me who you are," he said, "and then we will see if we can't get this matter straightened out. Aaron Lapwing is playing some deep game, and he seems to have dragged me into it, but why, I can't imagine."

The girl looked at Roddy dubiously, but finally accepted his invitation to the chair in the cabin, where Lapwing had sat down and folded her hands.

"I am Lady Alice Halliwell," she said. "Really, Mr. Nicholson, I like Lapwing. I was in Albania during the recent war, in charge of the English section of the Red Cross Hospital at Durazzo. That was where I met Prince Herod. And I met him again in New York, where Lord Hazard was the newspaper.

She broke off in embarrassment, and Roddy saw the color creep up beneath the white veil she wore about her face. Then it receded, leaving her deathly pale.

"Where he had received an appointment in the office of the Consul-General. The English Government wanted to keep him away from the Princess, you know, because he was playing a wrong part in politics. They thought he was favoring the pan-Slavic party, and leave Prince Hassan. And I was to meet him there. But he wouldn't accept. And so—"

She stirred her toe and dug the toe of her little shoe into the carpet.

"So I have come back with his highness, Prince Herod, to help him reorganise his principality," she said. "There is need of so much uplift with the people, and Prince Herod wants, Mr. Nicholson. But, of course, you would not be interested in uplift. You don't drink is a very practical thing," she said.

Roddy sat bolt upright in his bunk, despite the pain that this action caused him.

"Now, Lady Alice, I want you never to mention the word 'drink' to me again," he said. "I don't drink. I was drugged by that scoundrel, Lapwing, and carried aboard this ship. But I am on to Lapwing's infernal scheme or other that he is hatching out. And it is my private opinion," he added, "that the idea had never last come to him, "that I am destined to be the husband of the Princess Herodias."

Roddy's badinage did not meet with any responsive outburst of appreciation. Lady Alice rose to her feet with quiet dignity.

"I am sure I hope you are right," she said. "Her highness, Princess Herodias is a very estimable young lady. I have no doubt that you and she will be admirably suited to each other."

She walked toward the door, and then, remembering her official function, stopped to fire a parting shot.

"Since you don't drink better," she said, "I think it would be advisable for you to try to dress and come above as soon as possible, to get the exercise on the sea air. There is nothing like sea air, in your circumstances. And you will be allowed one half tablespoonful of cognac brandy twice a day until Thursday, and then once a day till Sunday, and after that a teaspoonful a day, if you feel like nothing."

"Lady Alice!" shouted Roddy indignantly, "can't I make you believe me?"

But Lady Alice Halliwell was walking through the doorway as calmly as though she had just administered an anesthetic to some delirium-tortured war victim in the English section of the Red Cross Hospital at Durazzo, during the Balkan War. Roddy looked after her and groaned.

However, he decided that it would be best to take her advice. Once dressed and on his feet, he would be able to meet the situation better. He was wearing a suit of very short and baggy pajamas, bearing on them in red stitching the mystic symbol, "A. L." However, he found his clothes hanging in a little closet at the foot of his bunk, and, ten minutes later, fully dressed, he made his way up on deck.

The yacht was not so small as he had imagined. It was a respectable little ship, of just the size that is built to carry small parties safely about the globe. She was making good speed through the water under a hot sun, whose altitude indicated that she was in a more southerly latitude than the orchestra-to-hammock belt. At her stern Roddy perceived a polished and very serviceable-looking small gun, possibly a five-pounder automatic. She flew the American flag from her mast, but at the bow was a flag of yellow and blue, with a monogram in red which surmised to be the private flag of Prince Herod.

Upon the deck, seated comfortably in their chairs, were Prince Herod and Aaron Lapwing.

Roddy approached them. There was murder in his eye, and yet he did not quite know what he was going to do.

Aaron Lapwing and Prince Herod rose out of his chair with a bland smile, his hand extended.

"Welcome on deck, Mr. Nicholson," he said. "It is a pleasure indeed. I trust that you are feeling all right again?"

Prince Herod grasped Roddy with a singular gleam in his eye. Roddy, looking at Lapwing, fancied he detected the air which said: "Please keep up the pretense."

"I'm feeling pretty well, Mr. Lapwing," Roddy answered in a monogram. "I would like you can't kidnap an American citizen and jab a hypodermic strong enough to stupefy an ox, and get away with it where can I get a glass of water?" he broke off abruptly.

For in his anger had made him forget his thirst, but, with the hot sun beating down on him he suddenly became consciousness of his parched throat, and very faint besides.

Aaron Lapwing placed a hand on Roddy's arm. "Sit down by the, Prince and I'll get you a refresher," he said. "What'll you take? Gin rickey, whisky? Sure."

At that instant Roddy perceived Lady Alice coming up the stairs. She reached the deck just behind them, and he undecided whether to approach or not.

"I understand, Lapwing," said Roddy, grinding his teeth—"plain water as long as I'm on this boat."

Lapwing disappeared, and Roddy sat down beside the Prince, who was still surveying him with that same look of daggers were still in his belt, and he was toying with them. He was the most villainous-looking old man that Roddy had ever set eyes on. A long scar ran diagonally across his nose, from mouth to eyebrow, and his mustache, which was stained yellow from tobacco, drooped like a bar sinister. His eyebrows joined across the top of the nose in a ferocious scowl.

"How day!" said Prince Herod.

"Pretty good—warmish," answered Roddy.

"Nice day," the Prince repeated. "Oh, yes, nice day."

"It is a nice day." Roddy agreed. "Are we going to Durazzo? Can I send a cable dispatch from there?"

"Oh, yes, nice day," Prince Herod answered.

Roddy nodded with sympathetic understanding, and at that moment Mr. Lapwing came back accompanied by an Albanian who bore a tray with glasses, ice in tumblers and a decanter—also a bottle of gin.

Roddy gulped down his drink greedily. Then he had his glass refilled. Then Lady Alice came up.

"Spiced sea water, this," said Roddy. "Do you distill it from sea water?"

He thought he saw a twinkle of amusement in Lady Alice's eyes.

"I am glad you have come up, Mr. Nicholson," she said.

"Now, Mr. Lapwing," began Roddy, rising.

They walked the length of the deck together and Roddy noticed that there was a Maxim-Nordenfelt, a powerful little piece of ordnance, and a small heap of shells piled on the port side of her.

"You see, it's this way, Mr. Nicholson," Lapwing began. "It's all a terrible mistake. I never meant to kidnap you at all. We didn't know it was you till we got you aboard. Then there was no time to go back after the right party."

"You did mean to kidnap somebody, then, Mr. Lapwing?" asked Roddy.

"Oh, quite," answered Lapwing. "But not you. And so the only thing we can do will be to set you ashore at Durazzo with apologies and ample remuneration for your experience. The fact is, we thought you were Lord Sutcliffe, and it was absolutely necessary to get him away from Prince Hassan. You know, Sutcliffe is half Austrian, a very dangerous menace to Albania's interests, and with influence enough to pull the strings in half a dozen European capitals. It was an unfortunate mistake, as I said, and Prince Herod is feeling very disappointed about it."

"Yes, but see here! How about that telephone booth?" asked Roddy.

"Why, Mr.—er—Nicholson, I did break my key, as I told you. But Prince Herod's men had seen me take your there, and, in the darkness, they mistook you for Sutcliffe. That's all. I was horrified to learn what had happened when I came aboard and found you unconscious in the cabin. So you must be the guest of the Prince until we reach Durazzo, which we ought to make in about a couple of weeks, unless we have trouble with Hassan, who is on our heels."

"So that's what the gun is for, is it?" asked Roddy. Then, without waiting for an answer, But why did you connect such a row about my being a dreadful, and setting Lady Alice against me?"

"Pooh! I had to say something," answered Lapwing.

"But you've gone and ruined my reputation with—"

Aaron Lapwing laid his hand fraternally on Roddy's shoulder. His eyes twinkled with amusement.

"Don't be absurd," he said, "thoughts about Lady Alice into your head, young man," he said. "She's a very commonplace sort of young woman, a middle-class young Englishwoman of good family, you know, who goes about the world trying to run better than her people can run them for themselves. Besides, she's as good as engaged to Lord Sutcliffe. You shall look her over, Australia. Now, the Princess Herodias is a woman in a thousand. And I'll tell you something, Roddy. Princess of the Mamori clan has to go abroad for a husband!"

"No eligibles in Mali—Malisnori?" Roddy laughed.

"It isn't that, Mr. Nicholson. But they've learned the dangers of intermarriage, you see. In everything else Herod's kingdom is more or less related to everybody else. And they can't marry their Mohammedan neighbors, so the Princesses are supposed to go abroad and find their husbands. So long as they're of healthy stock it doesn't matter who they are. To marry a Princess of Albania is to ally yourself with the oldest and proudest family in Europe, that dared its part in the world when the kings and queens of Europe were painted savages. Savvy, Mr. Nicholson?"

Nicholson nodded his head in thought. He saw the line of Lapwing's argument. And the more he thought of the fiery Princess Herodias, the more the gray eyes of Lady Alice Halliwell shone before him.

Lapwing was lying, of course. He had lied about the kidnaping. Roddy knew that it was no accident. He had probably set out to kidnap the Duke. And there was not the remotest possibility of his being considered an eligible suitor for the Princess Herodias' hand. But why was he lying?

Evidently Lapwing's scheme was so deep-laid, so complicated, so ordinary methods of analysis would apply to its solution.

He nodded curtly, and, turning away, strode back to where Prince Herod and Lady Alice sat side by side in the deck chairs. Lady Alice was talking vehemently to the Prince in his own language, and the Prince was listening with a desperate expression upon his swarthy face. It was evident that "uplift" as applied to Albanian women had no charms for him. His attitude of the process was a fateful of bank notes.

Roddy looked on, fascinated. Lady Alice was so perfectly self-possessed, so calm, and so much the English type, but he knew that she was one of those intrepid English girls who, by sheer force of personality, can make themselves at home in any region of the world, even in the wildest and most barbarous. To their credit it must be said that they exert their influence universally for the civilization of humanity.

As Roddy watched her he became his pacing, he saw the Princess. She was crouched, half-hidden, behind one of the deck superstructures and was watching him like a panther. She was watching him watch Lady Alice, and the expression in her face was like a panther's, also. At that instant the tension was broken by a familiar sound, which rang like music in Roddy's ears. It was the voice of the dinner bell.

CHAPTER V.

FIRE AND WATER.

TWO days later, Roddy was pacing the deck at about the same hour. He had got no further toward a solution of the mystery.

The ship were silent affairs. They were served by a grim old Albanian butler, and Roddy had noticed that every body on board had seemed to go about his duty in stubborn silence, from all the taciturn Italian captain to the Albanian servants of the Prince.

The crew consisted of Levantines. It seemed strange to Roddy that Aaron Lapwing had not selected an American crew, or, at least, one composed of the customary north European units. However, this did not puzzle him as much as the sense

of being carried forward in a plot of which every one but himself seemed cognisant. No, there was one person who certainly was not cognisant. That was Lady Alice. She seemed unsuspicious of anything and everybody; she had even agreed, though a little doubtfully, to accept Roddy's version of his adventures.

"I never inquire into things," she had explained to him, "I have my gifts, and I do it. I am interested in nothing else. That is the only way to accomplish anything, Mr. Nicholson."

But Roddy hardly ever saw Lady Alice, except at meal times. She seemed to avoid him intentionally. And she had never seen the Princess Herodias, even at meals, since he perceived her watching him and Lady Alice.

As for Aaron Lapwing, his manner indicated unmistakably that he had resented Roddy's short acceptance of his explanations; and Roddy deemed it wisest to avoid any further discussion with him until he had solid ground beneath his feet, and not the decks of a yacht in mid-Atlantic.

Roddy fancied that Prince Herod's matutinal "Fine day!" was becoming a trifle grim and sardonical. However, he tried not to notice Aaron's disfavour. It made him a little nervous. He did not trust the cutthroats who surrounded him any more than he trusted Lapwing.

But on the second day after his appearance on deck for the first time he found himself face to face with the Princess Herodias. Prince Herod was seated in his deck chair, smoking, and staring out into the distance. He had sat there immobile for nearly an hour.

Roddy went toward the Princess. He felt distinctly foolish, and it was startling to realise that their short acquaintance had been such an eventful one.

He did not quite know what he was going to say to her, but he felt it to be his duty to offer some sort of an apology. But as he approached her, instead of showing resentment, the Princess dropped the veil modestly over her pretty face, and stood before him, a modest Esther rather than a defiant Vashti.

"Princess," began Roddy, stammering a little, "I'm very sorry about that bow."

The Princess stood quite silent and still, and Roddy tried again.

"If you'll return it to me, I'll wear it as long as I live," he said, gulping down the lie.

A slender hand came out from among the voluminous draperies, and clasped Roddy's arm. They walked slowly along the deck. As Roddy walked it seemed to him that the yacht was slowing down. She was certainly proceeding at about half speed. But she showed no sign of stopping. Prince Herod still sat in his chair, but Lady Alice had gone below, and Aaron Lapwing was nowhere to be seen. The sun had reached the zenith, and it was blazing hot.

"Will you forgive me, Princess?" asked Roddy, trying to peer beneath the draperies. He could see only two sparkling eyes and the outlines of a pretty nose and chin.

"If you will promise——" came a muffled voice.

"Anything!" said Roddy devoutly. It was really necessary to regain the Princess' favor.

"I like Lady Alice nearly as well as you like me."

And, singularly enough, Roddy was just wondering whether he could or could not.

"But I love you," the Princess resumed. "In Albania we are primitive. We have gone through the ordeals of fire and water for a woman, he has her soul. And you have gone through the ordeal of fire for me, Mr. Nicholson. But I loved you before that, when you saved me from that beast, Count Sutchiff, and my father knows I have tried to persuade father to have him skinned alive, but father says we must first catch him."

"We'll try to, your highness," said Roddy, diplomatically.

"And then you are a man any woman must admire," Herodias resumed. "You are so brave. And you can drink like a hero. You must drink beautifully, for you drink heartily, and father himself was once drunk for a whole day and a night; but never was I so proud of him as when I could lie for three whole nights and days in a stupor."

"But, your highness——" protested Roddy.

"When I crept into your room and saw you lying there, so pale, so still, and yet alive, and thought that in one little hour you had been able to drink yourself into a stupor that lasted three days and nights, I felt as though one of our old heroes had come back to earth," the Princess continued. "And then——"

The little hand came out from among the draperies and curved into a dimple at the corner of her mouth. She pressed his lips to the exact place that the Princess permitted for osculatory purposes. And then he sighed. For he was getting all the time into deeper water.

The course of their promenade brought them to that part of the deck on which Prince Herod sat. Roddy looked at the old man, and then at Herodias. How was it possible that such a demoniacal old scoundrel could have a daughter like this?

The presence of the Princess at his side was intoxicating. The heavy veil, which she had thrown over her face only plqued the imagination, and the two eyes that looked out above it were soft and alluring. The Princess' draperies diffused a faint and subtle odor suggestive of sandalwood. She was a being, elusive and incomprehensible.

Roddy sighed. He was in a very strange state of mind just then. It seemed to him that as they passed Herod there was an expression upon his face meant as a communication to his daughter. Roddy glanced hastily at Herodias, but her eyes were unfathomable.

They strolled the length of the deck twice. The Princess stopped and leaned back against the rail. Her eyes were fixed on Roddy's, and he felt the challenge in them. She was putting forth her strength in silence to bind a captive at her feet—a captive of love. Suddenly the rail gave way. Herodias staggered, screamed and disappeared overboard. She had been leaning against that part of the rail which formed a gate for a gang-

He plunged into the water.

way, and it had opened, precipitating her into the sea. Roddy saw the mass of swirling draperies in the foamy wake of the yacht. He fastened the top button of his coat and plunged into the green water. And, even as he plunged, he was conscious of seeing Aaron Lapwing hurry out of a little cabin upon the deck and make for the stairway.

An instant later, Roddy was under the surface, battling to regain it. He came up, drew in a chestful of air, and struck out toward the Princess. She was perhaps a hundred strokes distant. She floated like a flower among her draperies, perfectly still, as though she lay on a couch. When Roddy reached her he saw that she was not in the least disconcerted. Her breast rose and fell gently, her eyes were wide open and staring up at the sun without blinking. Roddy placed one arm beneath her.

"Lie still! There is no danger!" he shouted.

Then, treading water, he looked back. The yacht had stopped, and a boat was already afloat and making toward them.

And Roddy was perfectly convinced that the old scoundrel had given a hidden hint daughter threw herself into the sea. With feudal loyalty she had obeyed—but then, she could not know. Perhaps she knew, too, that the yacht had been proceeding under half speed in order to render the rescue easier. Aaron Lapwing had seen to that detail as he saw to all. Nothing escaped his mind. He was a Napoleon of trickery. Roddy knew that the Prince, Herodias, and Lapwing were in the same conspiracy, of which he was the victim. Perhaps Herodias was only the tool of it. But it was a situation that disgusted him.

And why?

Roddy could make neither head nor tail of the problem. He sat silent in the boat as the sailors pulled back for the yacht, racking his brains. Fifteen minutes later Herodias and he were standing on deck again, and the vessel was proceeding at full speed eastward. The Prince was seated in his chair, in the same attitude as before. There was half an inch of ash on his cigar. He had smoked while his daughter was in the water, smoked steadily, without the aware of his heroism, beside the girl whom he has just rescued.

Lady Alice turned and went below, and, as she disappeared, Aaron Lapwing came up the stairs. He approached the group and spoke to Prince Herod. He must have spoken in Albanian, for Roddy could not understand a word of what he said. It was exactly characteristic of Lapwing to have learned Albanian, the most difficult of all languages, in order to further his schemes. Roddy saw Prince Herod start and throw away his cigar. He covered frantically at Lapwing and shook his head. Then Princess Herodias addressed her father. She spoke imperiously, and his answer seemed imploring. But Herodias, stamping her little foot upon the deck, poured forth a torrent of words which completely silenced the old brigand. Aaron Lapwing turned to Roddy to interpret.

"It is an Albanian custom, Mr. Nicholson," he explained. "When one has passed through the ordeals of fire and water for a woman, as they say, he is expected to become her husband. And since you have gone through the two ordeals for her highness, Princess Herodias."

"Is that what she says?" asked Roddy. "Yes. His highness, who has had high, er aims for her, is naturally much perturbed by the circumstances. But he does not affront Albanian feeling in such a matter—in fact, if he flew in the face of popular tradition in such a case, he would never be able to show his face among the Malisnori again."

"Well, he wouldn't miss much," thought Roddy.

But he said nothing. He had no time to speak, for all at once the Princess, throwing back her veil, unfitled her beautiful face toward him, and waited. And Roddy, being human, kissed her upon the lips. At that moment he saw Lady Alice ascending the stairs again. She carried a bottle of cognac in one hand, and, in the other, a wineglass. Roddy knew that she had been a spectator of the incident.

The Princess watched the English girl with a look of challenge, insolent and contemptuous. She flung one arm around Roddy's neck, and the three formed a dramatic picture. Then Prince Herod got up from his chair and, advancing toward Roddy in the manner of a benevolent father-in-law, laid one heavy, sword-slashed hand upon his shoulder.

"Nice day," he said. "Oh, yes, nice day."

Then Lady Alice spoke, in a tone meant, presumably, to set them all at ease, though her voice trembled.

"I am sure I congratulate you, Mr. Nicholson," she said. "You need a little stimulant after your immersion, and, besides, it is time for you to have your champagne. Will you have brandy?"

Even the kindest and most sympathetic English girl has the ability to be a little nasty when the occasion seems to demand it.

CHAPTER VI.

LADY ALICE EXPLAINS.

RODDY thought he understood the situation. For some reason, probably that which Lapwing had advanced, namely, the necessity of Albanian princesses going abroad to find their husbands, he had been picked out by Lapwing to marry Princess Herodias. Perhaps Lapwing thought that a reputable matitude would give him a leverage with the press. One could never tell what wild fantasies were hatched out in his brain.

Having selected Roddy, Lapwing had contrived the fire and water episodes, slowing down the yacht to make the rescue easier. And so here he was, the affianced husband of a barbarian girl, and son-in-law to the most disreputable royal scoundrel on any European throne.

True, he was not a son-in-law at present. But Roddy surmised that things would move still more swiftly after the yacht reached Durazzo. And, since no man likes having love advances rewarded upon him against his will, Roddy did not feel quite so happy as he ought to have felt, when loved by a young and beautiful girl of royal blood. In his dilemma one person alone appeared a possible confidant. That was Lady Alice. Roddy resolved to confide in her frankly, ask her advice, and beg her to befriend him.

Two more days had gone by, and Roddy had not seen his fiancee. She seemed, indeed, to have appeared only for the purpose of being rescued and affianced; this done, she had withdrawn to the seclusion of her cabin.

Lady Alice had continued to evade Roddy. Moreover, she had not even been sarcastic about his best body. That was an ominously bad portent in Roddy's eyes.

Roddy's mind was in a ferment. At one moment, when the glorious eyes of Herodias rose before his mental vision, he resolved to defy her husband, supplant Prince Herod, and rule over a mob of turbulent Malisnori. He had visions of a republic to be led up to civilisation and enlightenment according to American principles. At another moment he contemplated making a break for liberty at Durazzo, claiming the protection of the American consul, if there was one, and taking the ship for home-ward. In either case, as a good newspaper man, he intended to send a cable dispatch to the effect that he had achieved thus far.

A happy thought occurred to him. Possibly the yacht which was apparently named the Corsair, might stop at the Azores. If so, he might be able to slip ashore there.

He got up from his bunk and went on deck. Nobody was there. In the grilling heat of the afternoon Prince Herod was accustomed to take his siesta. Roddy descended to the lower deck. He was looking for Lady Alice, although he did not quite know it himself. And he came face to face with her as he descended to the cabin floor that ran around the staterooms there. Lady Alice inclined her head frigidly and seemed about to pass on, but Roddy stopped her.

"Won't you have a little talk with me, Lady Alice?" he asked.

"About what, Mr. Nicholson?" she inquired, looking him in the eyes frankly.

"I don't exactly know," answered Roddy. "I'm in a devil of a fix, I need a normal human being's voice in my ears again, so that I can know I'm really Roderick Nicholson, and not No. 6708 in Bloomingdale."

"That is an extravagant aspiration, Mr. Nicholson. But if you mean that you want sympathy, surely there is one on board more qualified to offer it to you than I," said Lady Alice.

Nevertheless she allowed him to lead her to a seat outside one of the cabins.

"You see, Lady Alice," he began, "everything seems like a lunatic's dream to me. To begin with, I was kidnaped aboard Aaron Lapwing's yacht, as I have told you, and I haven't the slightest idea why, but I am sure Lapwing has some crazy scheme up his sleeve."

"You advanced a very satisfactory reason when we first met," said Lady Alice.

There was the ghost of a smile about her lips, but, nevertheless, she had turned very white.

"Oh, blow the Princess!" Roddy exclaimed.

Lady Alice arose with dignity. "I cannot stay here and listen to such remarks about your fiancee," she said.

Roddy stood up in front of her, took Lady Alice by the hand, and plumped her down into the seat again. Strangely

enough, the strong-willed young woman obeyed him without resistance.

"Now I'm going to talk straight," said Roddy. "I don't know what Aaron Lapwing's game is, or the Prince's, or the Princess', but I am sure of one thing: I am not going to marry the Princess."

And, though he had not been at all sure of it a moment before, Roddy was dead sure of it now.

"If I had a wife like that," he continued, "the first thing I should do would be to tame her."

"Dear me, you are a very masterful man, Mr. Nicholson," said Lady Alice.

"Well, anyway," said Roddy, "I don't hold myself responsible because she flings her arms around my neck and tells me that I am to be her husband because I have saved her from fire and water. See here, Lady Alice, what do you think Lapwing's game is? Hasn't his presence with the Prince's party appeared strange to you?"

Lady Alice surged to Roddy with an expression of great earnestness.

"Mr. Nicholson," she said, "as I told you before, there is a mystery which I have learned in my travels about the world, and that is, never to inquire and never to be surprised. Life is just as romantic, just as strange, as the most extravagant of novelists depict it. If one hopes to effect any improvement in the social condition of the unfortunate women of barbarian lands, one must concentrate all one's efforts on them. I know nothing. I am surprised at nothing. I inquire into nothing. If I did, my influence over his highness would immediately be gone. He is afraid of me, you know—"

Lady Alice's cheeks began to dimple. Really, she looked extraordinarily kind and winsome.

"The achievements of the militant suffragettes have become known everywhere in Eastern Europe, and have lost nothing in the telling," she continued. "Northshower are supposed to be a race of lionesses. Prince Herod is dreadfully afraid of me—superstitiously afraid, and he does not know it. I suspect I have the English Government behind me. Of course, I haven't any backing at all, but Mr. Nicholson, if I attempted to question him or interfere in anything political, you understand—"

She broke off and resumed:

"I have been watching you, Mr. Nicholson, and I am inclined to believe that your story is true. You have probably become involved in some subtle, complicated web of Oriental intrigue, whose purpose is something that you do not suspect for a moment. Your story is improbable. But then, everything connected with the Orient is improbable."

"Lady Alice, will you be my friend?" asked Roddy humbly. "I am only a boy and I am far afield, because we are Westerners, and we can't fathom the Oriental mind. I am sure our interests are mutual, and I believe we shall find our interests to lie together also."

"And the Princess?" asked Lady Alice, smiling, and putting out her hand with an affectation of frankness.

Roddy could see that she was deeply moved. As he clasped the girl's little, cool hand in his, he felt the quiver of every muscle in it. He could have knelt that he did not love the Princess Herodina at all.

They looked into each other's eyes, and there was no need to say anything. Instinctively they drew toward each other; and then, with a great effort, Lady Alice withdrew her hand and sprang to her feet.

"I must tell you something, Mr. Nicholson," she said, with all the coldness that she could muster. "I am engaged to marry Lord Botsam upon the 15th. I have been engaged since we were children."

Roddy stood up and looked drearily at her. He had known that she removed it from Lapwing, and yet he had flung the knowledge from him, and drifted like a piece of flotsam upon the tide, now drawing near to Lady Alice, now to the Princess.

"Mr. Nicholson," said the girl, laying her hand on his arm, "we are not children. We know that there are times and circumstances in life when we must not say what we want to say, or think and act as we want to. We are flies on the wheel."

"But the wheel goes round!" cried Roddy triumphantly. "Today above, tomorrow below; all things come round to those who know how to wait."

He saw the answer in her eyes, and his heart was wonderfully lightened. This was a game worth playing, indeed, now that the dice were loaded against him.

Lady Alice's hand fluttered down to his for an instant, and lay there. Then she was gone, leaving Roddy alone.

He meant to see her again through ground and beat him. He, too, had a prize at stake, and he meant to pursue it as single-heartedly as Lady Alice pursued her quest, through every change of fortune.

As he stood there he heard a scurrying of feet above him, and loud and excited shouting. He hesitated a moment, and then went up the stairs to the upper deck.

CHAPTER VII.

CAPTURED.

THE crew of about a dozen Levantines, together with Prince Herod's Albanian followers, were clustered about the Maxim-Nordenfelt, pointing out across the sea and chattering excitedly. Among them stood Prince Herod and Aaron Lapwing. Lapwing was holding his binoculars to Prince Herod's eyes and also pointing.

On the horizon Roddy saw a little wisp of smoke.

As he approached Lapwing spun round upon him.

"This is a bad thing for us all, Mr. Nicholson," he said, indicating the distant smoke, "and, indeed, Hassan's yacht; there isn't any doubt of it. He's overhauling us fast, too. We sighted him off the Bermudas and gave him our heels, but our boiler tubes are showing signs of giving us trouble, and we daren't drive the Corsair above seventeen knots. I'm afraid—"

He shook his head and looked so plausibly melancholy that Roddy knew he was lying.

He must be lying, for there was no manner of means by which Prince Hassan's yacht could have found the Corsair in the heart of the Atlantic. It would have been easier to have found a needle in the proverbial haystack. The only possible supposition was that Lapwing had secretly betrayed Herod to Hassan and had informed the latter as to the exact course that his yacht would take.

But, again, why?

"Nice day," said Prince Herod, handing Roddy the binoculars.

Roddy adjusted them, and now he could see the pursuing yacht distinctly. She seemed built on the same lines as the Corsair, only bigger. There seemed no possibility of escape. She must be fought, if Herod was to reach Albania safely.

The Prince, who had come back, addressed the group of chattering sailors. Instantly it resolved itself into a very disciplined company. Evidently these men were veterans of the Balkan War.

The breech of the gun was thrown open and a shell inserted into the magazine. The gun was pointed.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! The shells came roaring across the water, plunging into the sea about halfway between the vessels. The gun crashed back upon its mounting, and the yacht quivered under the vibration. At the same time the wheel was thrown over, and Roddy's pair swung into the trough of a choppy sea.

"I wonder why the captain changed her course at that moment," Roddy mused, as he tried to follow the flight of the missiles through the air.

And when Prince Herod, a veteran fighter, opened fire at an impossible distance?

And where was Aaron Lapwing? Had he gone below in fear? Did he imagine that he would be safer in his cabin than on deck?

Roddy strode up to Prince Herod. "Those men are simply wasting the ammunition," he remarked. "Why don't you wait till your target is within range?"

"Oh, yes," said the Prince, biting off the end of a cigar.

Roddy heard somebody coming up behind him, and, turning round, discovered Lady Alice.

"You are quite right, Mr. Nicholson," she said.

"Right?" inquired Roddy.

"There is something mysterious at the bottom of this. Some of the most experienced gunners of his highness' bodyguard. Unless they are simply trying to frighten Hassan away, they must be aware that their firing is ineffective at such a range. Besides, don't you realize that we have the speed?"

"And the ship slowed down just before the Princess fell into the water," answered Roddy. "Now I saw Lady Alice dart a quick look at him.

"What do you think it means?" asked Roddy.

Lady Alice went up to Prince Herod determinedly, and spoke to him. Roddy saw that she was expressing her opinion of Prince's face again. It was evident that his dislike of Lady Alice was second only to his fear of her. Roddy knew that she had fled England, that meddlesome England that stretches out her arm, threatening or commanding, over so many little countries.

Lady Alice came back to Roddy.

"I can't fathom his highness' intentions," she said. "He says he is thinking of surrendering. He says that if I were accidentally killed I should be sent back away his principality. Of course, that isn't the reason."

"We may be a coward," suggested Roddy.

Lady Alice shook her head with conviction.

"He is the bravest man in Albania," she answered. "He has fought in a hundred battles, and killed ten men with his own hands. They say his body is covered with scars. No! It is something else."

"They are getting ready to fire again," said Roddy, as the gunners inserted five more shells into the breech.

Again the five shots rang out, and again the gun rushed back upon its carriage. And then the wheel was thrown hard over once more.

This time it synchronized exactly with the recoil of the gun. Left was the Maxim-Nordenfelt quiver, topple, and then, as the ship swayed, the entire gun-carriage came loose from the deck to which it had been bolted, and the gun fell on its side and plunged sidewise down the deck.

The gunners sprang toward it, but they might as well have tried to stop one of their own shells in the muzzle. The momentum of the sliding metal sent it careering through their midst; it reached the edge of the deck, swept the rails aside as though they were of lath, and dropped into the sea.

After it rolled the shells, scattering from side to side, some plunging into the ocean, others dashing up against bulwarks and superstructures, a huge wave swept the deck, and the yacht, suddenly lightened, rolled back to port, till her boards were awash in the water. Then the Corsair continued upon her even course again.

Roddy was stupefied. He knew that it was no accident which had lost them their only means of offering resistance. He saw the amusement upon the Albanians' faces changing to anger.

Then there occurred as of distant street cars running on flat wheels round a curve and swiftly approaching. The boom of the gun followed hard upon it afterward, and a column of water splashed upward about four hundred feet astern of the Corsair.

Prince Hassan had opened fire in turn, at a distance of about a mile. Roddy could see the shells churning up great waves, overhauling the Corsair at every stride.

Then Herod threw away his cigar. His brows were bent into a fearful scowl. He shouted in a voice that could have been heard a mile away.

The gunners and the rest of the Prince's retinue suddenly became silent. Roddy could see that they were fighting under intense emotion, which only disciplined loyalty restrained. Roddy heard the crash of the shells overhead. The Corsair drifted upon the waves. Then the flag at the bow came slowly fluttering down.

The Corsair had surrendered.

Up the stairs and out upon the deck, gibbering like monkeys, came the crew, wrenched about like a mummy, and Roddy could see only the two eyes that flashed above the veil. Herod's hand clutched him and stood motionless at his side. She did not offer him her hand to kiss.

There was, too, a look of unwillingness about the bearing of this veiled figure that sent a horrible suspicion across Roddy's mind. She had not spoken to him at all since their betrothal; she had not seen him. Could Albania be one of those lands about which he had read, where apart from barbarism, where matrimonial customs prevailed, and the husband, once chosen, saw nothing more than an appendage of his wife, and subject to her control? If so, this would explain the Prince's attitude toward them, among them the readiness of Prince Herod and his daughter to accept a man of unknown birth as a member of the royal clan.

Roddy stood, utterly helpless, at the Princess' side, while the crew had turned away. The Prince stood in the midst of his adherents, who, seemingly bowed with grief, stood with their sullen, angry arms folded and hopeless countenances.

Roddy, elevating one eyebrow, could see, out of the corner of his shoulder, that the shuttered window of a cabin immediately behind him was opened in such a way that the occupant could see without being seen. It was the cabin out of which Lapwing had hurried when Roddy leaped on board the Prince Herodina.

All that he could see through the shutter slats was a hand, plump, firm, and rosy-nailed, which he guessed that it belonged to Aaron Lapwing.

Hassan's yacht glided past the Corsair, at a distance of about a ship's length. She was manned by a crew of a couple of five-pounders were mounted at her bow and stern. After she was cleared Prince Hassan's group of swarthy Moslems raised derisive cheers as she swept by.

Two men stood in the bows. One was Prince Hassan, the other Sutcliffe, Sutcliffe yelled something through a megaphone.

Prince Herod held up his arms in token of surrender, and the scowl upon his face was more fearful than ever. It was not till he was aboard that Roddy perceived that Lapwing had remained aboard the Corsair, and was now the Levantine crew.

A surge of anger swept over him. He could doubt no longer that this, too, had been planned, down to the last detail, by that eccentric master mind. Everything had been prearranged. But to what purpose?

Evidently Lapwing knew, for the Corsair's screw throbbed, and the yacht, conscious of her destination, steamed slowly away from the side of her captures. And Roddy, biting his lips in shame and vexation, heard Lady Alice's voice in his ear.

"You were right, Mr. Nicholson," she whispered. "But remember: we are friends, as you have asked, and, whatever happens, I shall not forget that pledge."

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REASONABLE SUSPICION.

If you are good at puzzles
And solving problems dense,
I wish you'd kindly tell me
Some of your common sense;
Why is it you never see here
And sits right after night,
Awaiting proudly that he loves
To hear the kids recite?

William's recited "Ironsides,"
"Casabianca," too,
And Arthur Shall Not Ring Tonight,"
Until the air was blue.
And this query gets applauded,
And gurgled with delight!
Why is it you never see here
To hear the kids recite?

Bertha has done "Maud Mutter"
And "Barbra Frietchie" and
"Roll on, roll on, ye restless waves,
Roll higher up the strand,"
And Jerome Hall has yellow head
And chortled with delight.
Why is it that Dad is never there
To hear the kids recite?

Well, it's all right. I'll fool him
And take his place some time.
I'll transfer all my worldly goods
Into the good wife's name.
He shall not eat one bite of food
Nor touch me for a mite.
I'm sorry when he loves to likes
To hear the kids recite.

Love's Tragedy.

John Pinheadus resides east of the river. The smell from the leather board factories that line the river through the windows of his chamber in the wooden block. The incessant quack of ducks became him a part of the daily pulsing tacks, four cents a case. Sometimes he is a welt beater. Money he has saved, his bank account running into three figures.

The glamour of romance had not interested him in the least until the other night. Then he met Mary at the dance in the little hall at the foot of the hill, and was immediately smitten. Mary hailed from Poland, now torn with strife and bloodshed.

But Peter Flatface basked in the sunlight of her smiles between the dances. The battle was on, Mary would be his. There were a host of other girls left for Pete. John played first cornet in the band for the first part of the evening, but when Mary consented to hear old

America's Secret War

Or, International Intrigue

By Marquis James

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE ARCH-PLOTTER.

MARJORIE'S heart was light when she awoke. She was herself again after days of heartache and depression. Guthrie had come. The young officers, who had despaired of seeing her again in her old moods, were delighted. Quickly the dance was organized for the evening, and Marjorie consented to lead the grand march with dashing young Lieutenant Richards of the cavalry.

While these gayeties were being planned, Gaston Sigbee was in secret conference with the high officers. The stolen plans had not been recovered. No trace had been obtained of Guthrie. His report to the Department at Washington on Sandoz' mission was two days overdue. If his plan of secret war was to succeed, the stolen documents had to be returned before the end of the night.

He ordered the searching party for the night doubled, and announced a reward of $1,000 for information as to the man who should take Guthrie dead or alive. Furthermore, this expedition was to be carried on in secret. The detail searching for Guthrie was ostensibly assigned to patrol duty on the Mexican border.

The Colonel heard of the ball to be given at the post that night, and approved of it. This gayety, he argued, would serve as a mask to cover the sterner business at hand, and keep certain young officers, who were not on the inside as to the plans, from suspecting anything.

That night at dinner Marjorie was all anticipation. She awaited the dance as eagerly as a caged bird awaits the day of its freedom. She could think of nothing else. She was very sorry, however, that her mother were not there to be her father away. The Colonel, while he did not dance, took delight in attending functions and was secretly rather proud of the attentions showered upon his beautiful and accomplished daughter.

The dinner was perfect. Sato seemed to outdo himself in serving it. Truly, as Marjorie remarked, Sato was the ideal servant.

"Well, Sato," said the Colonel with an air of finality when the meal was finished, "you should be flattered that your services please my daughter. In recognition of this I am going to give you a day's leave of absence tomorrow from all duties. You may rest and enjoy yourself."

"Thank you, sir," returned the Jap in the accents peculiar to his race, as he went about clearing away the dishes from the table.

Marjorie was the belle of the ball, the envy of all others at the dance. She was at once the envy of other women, whose escorts deserted them rather unchivalrously to lavish attention upon Marjorie, and the despair of young officers who were unable to get their names on her dance card. The soft California evening air was exhilarating, the music was intoxicating. Marjorie threw herself into the revels and coquetries of the dance with an air of reckless abandon which heightened her charms.

This scene of life and gayety was well counterbalanced by the scene in the Colonel's study. The lines of anxiety and care had carved themselves deeply into his grizzled countenance. He had striven to keep up appearances when before his daughter and his fellow officers, but when alone, away from the gaze of all eyes, he sank into himself to the depth of dejection. It was ten o'clock. The night was one-fourth gone, and no word had been received from the missing Guthrie and the stolen papers.

Presently there came a soft rap at the door.

"Who's there?" demanded the Colonel.

"Sato," was the cryptic response.

"And what do you want at this hour?" the veteran demanded harshly. "I thought I had given you a day's vacation."

"I wish to see the honorable Colonel," the Jap replied meekly.

The Colonel realized he was thirsty.

"Come in, Sato," he said, intending to send the Jap after some water.

Sato stepped in. The only part of his raiment visible was a long cravenette coat, which covered his body from chin to heels.

"Sato, bring me a pitcher of water and a glass," the Colonel ordered before the Jap could speak.

"But I am no longer your servant, sir," the Jap responded in chilling tones.

"What?" the Colonel exploded. "You refuse to obey me? True, I gave you a leave of absence, but I hereby cancel

He lacked only his saber.

it. For your impudence you get no day off. Remove your coat. I have work for you to do."

"I am out of your service, sir," Sato responded. His tone was no longer the deferential one of a servant. He spoke as one who gives command rather than receives them. "I am out of your service, but not on a vacation. I am out of your service forever."

Notwithstanding, the Japanese obeyed the Colonel's order. He removed his coat. But instead of the quaint little suit which he invariably wore, his form was encased in the resplendent, trim blue uniform of the Japanese army. Several of the Mikado's orders of honor blazed from his breast. Two revolvers bulged from under his coat. He lacked only his saber to make him fit for regimental parade.

The Colonel was stunned. He was speechless. The Jap stood rigidly at "attention," smiling sarcastically at the Colonel's plight. In that Sigbee regained command of his voice.

"What is the meaning of this?" he gasped.

But there was no need of an answer from the lynx-eyed Japanese army officer who stood before him. The Colonel grasped it all in a moment. He knew the Jap was heavily armed, but he took a desperate chance. He was a man who grasps at straws. With the swiftness that would have done credit to a man half his age the Colonel's right hand flew to his hip. His heavy army revolver was drawn in a minute.

Yet the Jap never moved. His leering smile never changed. The Colonel aimed his weapon straight at the Jap's breast, and pulled the trigger. A sharp metallic click was the only response as the hammer snapped on the empty chamber.

"You see, I was prepared," said the Jap at length. "I was thoughtful enough to remove the shells from your pistol. It is not likely that I should omit to attend to such an all-important detail of a plan I have been five long years working out to bring to a successful issue."

"As you see by my uniform, sir, I am an officer in the Japanese army. I am Lieutenant Togo Schnister, not Sato, the servant. I have obeyed your commands for five years. I have run your errands. I have been at your beck and call. But in these years, I did more than the menial tasks you assigned me. I have been a spy in the service of my Government. I have learned the innermost secrets of your army. Secrets that mean death and destruction to your proud and haughty people.

"And now I reveal myself. I am master now. You are the one who obeys. I know what brings you to your study tonight while others are at the dance. You are making desperate efforts to recover the missing papers relating to your carefully planned enterprise at Tahoto. You may search in vain. I have these papers.

Whereupon, with a cruel chuckle, the Jap drew from an inside pocket the priceless papers, and flaunted them in the Colonel's face.

"Here they are," the Jap gloated. "Here is the design of fifteen Yankee fortification, sealed and ready to deliver over to my Mikado. A finely spun scheme you had. Indeed, it is the humiliating of Japan. But the tables are turned. Instead of Japan, it is the despicable American who are in the dust. Americans will be our servants—our slaves in generations to come; for these are not all the secret documents I am taking back with me. Every night, while you slept and while that clumsy Indian stood outside your door, I have rifled your desk. Of course, I stole nothing. That would have aroused suspicions. I am too clever for that. I made exact copies of all matters of importance, then rearranged your papers exactly as I found them, so that in all these five years, never once have you suspected.

"I might have been longer in your service had not the Tahoto matter come up. I could not risk making a copy of that document and leaving the original in your hands. That would be damning. So I stole it, and, by a fortunate circumstance, supplied you as directed to another. I did not have to flee unannounced. I have been given the pleasure of this interview, of humbling you just as you have humbled me for the past five years.

"You may think me foolish, or carried away with my success, that I disclose my identity and intentions. Rest assured I have considered that. You will talk to no one for forty-eight hours. And then, by which time—forever too late—for you to repair your blunder and your blindness."

With these words the Jap drew from his pocket a little phial. He uncorked it and threw an odorous liquid about the room—on the desk and on the floor. Instantly the room became filled with a dense aroma.

"I have drugged you," said the Jap. "The effect of this drug is powerful. In five minutes you will lose consciousness. You will not awaken for forty-eight hours, and then I will be gone, gone back on my way to Tokio with the secret that means the ruin of the proud but unsuspecting American nation. Banzai, Mikado, my Colonel! Banzai, Mikado!"

With that the Jap bowed low in mock deference, and stepped outside the door. He waited for a moment. He heard the Colonel stir as if to escape from the room. But the effort was futile. In another minute a heavy breathing betrayed the fact that the drug had had its effect.

The Jap donned his cravenette, which effectually covered his uniform, and slipped away into the night.

CHAPTER XV.

MURDER OR SUICIDE?

THE subtle Oriental drug the Japanese had used proved stronger than the equally subtle one which had predicted. It was the morning of the third day before the Colonel gained consciousness.

Meanwhile the entire post was mystified. Guthrie was still unapprehended and things were generally dull. Sato's disappearance added to the mystery but was partially explained when Marjorie told of the day of rest given him a day's leave of absence. It was surmised—for none knew the truth—that he had fallen in Shad company—been robbed perhaps and thus detained. Marjorie was alone in the room with her father when he moved upon his bed, opened his eyes and finally spoke in rational accents again.

For a long time after he regained consciousness, Colonel Sigbee seemed

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absorbed in thought. Finally he called his daughter over to his bedside.

"Margy, girl," he said, "your old father is going away. Going away on a long, long journey."

"Hush, papa," the girl said. "You are not yourself when you talk that way."

"On the contrary, I am quite myself, Margy" the father replied. "I only wish I was not. But it is true and real —all too terribly true and real. Margy, girl, after today you will not see your father any more. For a friend, look to Joe. Joe is the only person on earth I can trust. He will take care of you.

"I've raised Joe from a little boy. He has been like a son to me. Years ago when I was fighting Indians in the Northwest I came upon him. It was one night after a battle. We had routed the Indians at dreadful cost in lives, and driven them from their camp. In their haste to flee, the Indians had deserted little Joe, the son of the Big Chief, who was learning his first lessons of battle.

"I took him, and he became a very devoted servant, this heir to the chieftdom of the Apaches. Years later, he saved the life of your mother in a stage-coach holdup in Nevada. He brought her safely a hundred miles through the mountains.

"A little while after that you came into the world. Your mother died when you were born. In Indian customs this occurrence is something significant. Joe looked persistently at me as your 'medicine guardian,' as he called it. I complied. Whereupon he made a vow to his strange Indian god always to watch over and protect you.

"That is the reason, little girl, he sleeps just outside. That is the reason, when you are at a dance, Joe always stalks somewhere near. That is the reason you are scarcely ever out of his sight."

Marjorie had heard the story of how Joe came into her father's service; she had heard of his heroic rescue of her mother; she had known him as blindly devoted to herself as to her father; but never before had she heard of the strange oath and "eternal guardianship" the Colonel spoke of. She thought troubled her. She wondered if this silent Indian possibly knew more of her secret enterprises than she suspected.

"And so when worst comes to worst, look to Joe for protection," her father concluded. "Joe will care for you and keep you from harm."

Marjorie was weeping when she left her father's room. She could scarcely bring to speak as he did, she asked herself. She could not understand it. He spoke as if some great misfortune had befallen him. While not using that word, he spoke as if he were going to die and leave his daughter alone. Marjorie did not know the seriousness of the situation. She did not know of the treachery of Satz and Guthrie on account of the fact that Guthrie, the coiner of honeyed words and phrases, had won her confidence.

That night Colonel Sigbee was out of his bed and in his study again. He was a changed man. He looked like the man he might had been his stalwart frame. The lines of anxiety in his face were deepened. His hair had whitened.

The Colonel sat at his desk and contemplated his career. During his forty years in uniform his record had been that of an honorable, upright soldier. He had been entrusted with grave responsibilities to his Government, and always had carried them out in such a way as to reflect honor both upon himself and upon his nation. In casting about for a man to cope with the most serious crisis that had confronted this nation in years—one growing out of the present European war—the Department had chosen Colonel Sigbee.

And in the crowning touch of his career—he had failed. He had been duped and outwitted by a Jap spy posing as a secretary. The Colonel could not stand his disgrace. He drew from his holster his formidable forty-four caliber revolver and laid it on the desk beside him. He picked up a pen and wrote hurriedly. He folded the note, placed it in an envelope which he addressed to the Secretary of War.

He started to write another, this second letter he began: "My Dear Daughter:—I hope and trust you will forgive me for this;" he wrote. His hand trembled. A blot of ink fell from his pen and smeared itself upon the paper before him.

Just then he heard the door open swiftly. The Colonel turned quickly in his chair. It was Joe standing in the doorframe. The Lieutenant stood rigidly at attention and saluted his superior officer. Guthrie's eyes fell upon the paper before the Colonel. He saw what had been written.

"My dear Colonel, what is the meaning of this?" the young Lieutenant asked agitatedly.

"Since you have seen, I cannot disguise the truth," the Colonel replied in broken tones. "You have hounded me to death. It is suicide. I am going to end it all."

"Colonel, I regret the part I have been assigned to play."

"Bah! Regrets nothing. After the worst has been done it is a fine time to come around with soft words of regret. You have driven me to the extremity where a suicide's grave is the only avenue of escape. I can face death, but never dishonor."

With that the Colonel grasped his revolver and pointed it at Guthrie.

"I will not be a soldier can face death, but not dishonor," the veteran repeated.

The agile Guthrie was on him in a minute, grappling for the revolver. But desperation gave the Colonel strength. There was a muffled roar as the revolver exploded in the closed room.

With the mask of death on his face, the Colonel slumped to the floor, the blood streaming from the wound in his chest. The smoking weapon was in Guthrie's hand. And so after he had been the contact of the two in the struggle the Lieutenant's hands and clothes bore smeared evidence that Guthrie dealt by the prostrate form. He felt the Colonel's heart.

"My God, he's dead!" he exclaimed. "There is not a moment to be lost."

Swiftly Guthrie opened the drawers of the desk. He found the Colonel's private papers out on the floor. Examining them hurriedly he thrust certain ones in his pocket. His eyes fell upon the suicide notes.

"For my purposes it is not best that the Colonel's life thought to have ended his own life," Guthrie said to himself.

He grasped up the letter addressed to the Secretary of War. He tore it to finished note to Marjorie.

There were loud knocks upon the door. It was locked, but gave way under an assault with the butt of a rifle. Marjorie and Joe Tecumseh were there.

"You've killed my father! You've assassinated and robbed him!" the girl cried, taking in the scene at a glance.

With all the ferocity of his savage ancestors gleaming in his eyes, Tecumseh leaped for Guthrie.

There was but one avenue of escape, Guthrie took it. There was a crash of breaking glass as the Lieutenant plunged through the window and into the darkness.

CHAPTER XVI.

KIDNAPED!

THE Indian went through the window after Guthrie in an instant. But it seemed as if the night had swallowed up the man. Guthrie was nowhere to be seen. Marjorie ran from the house to spread the alarm.

"Oh, why did she ever trust him?" The thought stabbed her. "Why had she not shot him down from the ambush the night she had ridden with the posse of Guthrie and Wright in the woods!"

Instantly the post was up and in arms.

"The Colonel has been murdered!" The cry brought out the men in a minute, each determined to avenge the death of their leader.

Marjorie was on her horse, dashing madly about the post. She rounded a corner of the parade ground when a man stepped out from the shadow of a tree and seized her bridle.

Before the girl could make a move of resistance or outcry, she was thrown from her mount. A rag was thrust in her mouth. A huge black automobile swept up silently. The girl was tossed into the tonneau of the car, and the man leaped in after her.

There appeared to be four of the kidnapers. The face of each was hidden behind a black mask. They worked quickly and quietly. None of them spoke. The car shot out of the post like a black ghost in the night.

The feat was one of desperate recklessness. A party of soldiers not a hundred yards away had witnessed it. Instantly the cavalry was in pursuit, firing at the fleeing car. Bullets whizzed about the machine, but none was struck it. The driver opened the throttle to the last notch. The cavalry horses were no match in speed for the racer. Soon the car outdistanced the horsemen. Marjorie was at the mercy of her captors.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BLACK FOUR.

ON AND on and on, throughout the long night, the wild automobile continued on its way. The sound of the whirring wheels of the car was all that broke the stillness. Marjorie's captors did not once speak to her and seldom to each other except for a curt word of command from the huskiest of the four, who was seated in the rear seat to the girl's right, who apparently was the leader of the band.

The voices, so far as the girl was able into the distance. The faces of the men she could not see for the masks. The automobile passed few villages on its way, and no large towns. It was evident that it avoided settled communities. Without headlights it kept on its way darkness, reeling off mile after mile without the slightest slackening of its speed.

Marjorie was at first, and watchful of an opportunity to escape. It was a desperate chance, but she intended to take it at the hands of the Black Four!

The night wore away, but still the mad car plunged on. Gray appeared in the east. Marjorie strove to keep awake, but with every mile the task became harder. Overcome by fear and fatigue any longer, she fell asleep in her seat.

The leader of the Black Four noted this. Marjorie asleep, he ordered the car slackened. Presently, in a lonely road the machine was stopped. The driver examined his engine and refilled the gasoline tank which was all but empty as a result of the long journey. The big top on the car was raised and the curtains pulled down on each side. Daylight was at hand. Marjorie and the Black Four and they took elaborate precautions.

And the car was on its way, proceeding slower, so as not to arouse suspicions. Marjorie awakened, surprised to find herself in the car. One of her abductors had produced a box which, without speaking a word, he opened. A cup and saucer were set up in the car, and before Marjorie was spread an appetizing meal. There were sandwiches, cakes, coffee, bottled warm in a Thermos bottle.

By sign and without a word, it was indicated that Marjorie was to eat. She had no desire for food, but good judgment told her she had best eat something and counserve her strength. They were in open country now, and one of the silent men who sat beside the girl opened a window, letting in fresh fresh air.

As she ate, Marjorie noted the landscape. She knew she must be many miles away from Rosencrans. Marjorie had just completed her meal, and one of the men was looking through the glass peephole in the rear of the auto top, answered her. They were pursued. And evidently their pursuers were gaining.

"Faster, faster," the leader kept shouting to the man at the wheel.

And the car sped on, regardless of rocks and ruts, until it rocked like a ship in a storm.

Marjorie was thrilled. Her pursuers could be no one else but her rescuers, or else why should her captors be in such feverish haste?

She could not see the face of the man in the seat beside her, but his trembling hands betrayed his excitement. For all the reckless speed of the great black

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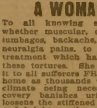

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"This wretched condition continued until I became interested in the letters of those who had cases like mine and who were being helped by eating Grape-Nuts.

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car, the automobile behind it was gaining, gaining, steadily gaining.

At last Marjorie could hear the roar of the pursuing machine. The leader of the Black Four took a desperate chance. The side curtains were ripped aside, and one of the men leaned out as if to discern the identity of those in the car that followed. He ducked back suddenly. Already the pursuing car had caught up with the black automobile, and now it had veered alongside. Yet she knew they saw her and recognized her. Yes, the man in the back seat was waving muddy at her, and, forming a megaphone of his hands, was shouting out.

"Jump for your life, jump into our machine," he cried.

"With the agility of a cat the girl was on her feet, poised for the leap. One of the Black Four grasped her to pull her back, but a blow from a rifle butt in the hands of Frank in the car alongside crumped him in a heap on the floor of the tonneau.

Marjorie leaped. But a crash, a shot and a roar that followed killed sensation. She was unable to tell whether she had landed in the rescue car or not.

She only knew she was in an auto going at terrific speed. A man was beside her. She looked at his face. It wore a black mask. It was the leader of the Black Four.

It was some moments before Marjorie realised what had happened. Then she remembered. She had seen a man in the front seat of the black car lean out, pistol in hand. But he had not aimed at the men in the car alongside. Realizing that Marjorie's rescue was a certainty unless he acted, he fired at a tired and exploded it.

The crippled rescue machine swerved from the road and smashed itself into kindling against a fence. None knew the fate of the occupants. The black car plunged on and the wreck was soon lost from sight. The rescue was effectually thwarted. Marjorie remained in the power of the Black Four.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SHANGHAIED!

A SENSE of continued motion awakened Marjorie from a troubled slumber. It was unlike the motion of the automobile. She opened her eyes. Her black masked companions were gone. Her surroundings were entirely different. She lay, stretched out on a spotless white bed in a cozy little room. The woodwork, she walls, everything was white.

Her eyes fell upon a little chair by the side of her bed. It was screwed to the floor. Then she noticed the little round window by her head. Quickly she looked out. There was no landscape to be seen. Nothing but a broad, rolling expanse of blue. The realization of her predicament was like a dagger thrust in her breast. The heavy swell betrayed that she was well out to sea.

She tried to recount the events which followed the frustration of the attempt to rescue her. After the failure she had dozed off. Subconsciously she recalled the sensation of the car stopping. A black bag had been thrust over her head. She felt strong arms about her grasping her arms. Yet she was too fatigued and sick of spirit to resist. Then she was asleep again. But now she realized it all. She had been shanghaied!

By the head of her bed she saw a bell marked "Steward." She pressed the button.

In a moment there was a soft knock at the door.

"Come," said Marjorie.

A trim young man with a deferential air stepped inside.

"Did you call me, miss?" he asked.

"Yes. Who are you?" Marjorie asked. "The steward, miss."

"Why am I on this boat?" Marjorie demanded.

"I am unable to answer that, miss. I never inquire into private affairs of the passengers."

"Who is the captain of this boat?"

"I have been instructed not to disclose that to you just now."

"Then you are a part of the plot, are you?" This fiercely from the girl.

"Oh, no, miss," returned the steward agitatedly. "I am not the part of any plot. I am a steward, miss, I assure you, and am at present. I have been informed that you would accuse me of being a plotter. They told me you were suffering hallucinations, if you will pardon the word, miss. But do not be disturbed. You are safe, the Captain says you are."

"The villains," Marjorie told herself. "They have duped this simple steward into believing I am insane."

"And why can you not disclose the name of the Captain?" she asked aloud.

"Orders is orders, miss."

"Whither are we bound?"

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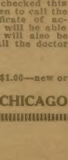

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"That I do not know. 'Pon my honor I speak the truth, miss. The Cap'n never tells his destination to us on board."

"What flag does this boat fly?" asked Marjorie.

"The American flag, miss."

This, at least, was some relief. Marjorie reckoned that if her abductors—evidently connected with the Black Four—had used this steward as a tool, she could do the same. The first thing she must do was to find out who was master of the ship, but she decided to play a waiting game.

"And what is your name?" she asked the steward.

"Franklin, miss. You may call me Franklin, and I am at your service, miss. But it is getting late. Could you suggest anything for your dinner, miss?"

But Marjorie was not hungry. She sent the steward away.

Presently she recalled him and ordered a sumptuous meal. It was more than she wanted, but she was making an experiment. In twenty minutes the immaculate Franklin was back with the meal, precisely as she had ordered it. The cuisine was perfect. In spite of her anxiety she relished the repast, and finished every dish.

The days wore on. The dutiful Franklin attended her every want. Was at her beck and call no matter what time of day or night. But still she was in the dark as much as ever regarding the fate and the identity of those into whose hands she had fallen. She plied the steward with artful questions but to no avail. Her guess was not so simple as he looked.

She was permitted to walk about the decks only at night. She saw no one but sailors, and these, like Franklin, evidently were under strict orders of silence, for none would answer her questions.

Despite the fact she had, at an unknown port on the California coast, been shanghaied aboard an unknown ship manned by unknown men, and bound for an unknown destination, the deference with which Marjorie was treated relieved, to a certain measure, her terrors.

Ten, fifteen days, passed. Marjorie knew they must land sometime soon. One night when she was on deck, leaning over the rail and looking out over the dark-blue waters of the calm Pacific, she felt a hand on her shoulder.

She had not known any one was near. She turned quickly. It was Franklin. He could do to suppress a cry. She was confronted by Joe Tecumseh.

A thousand unanswered, burning questions darted through her brain. But a stern signal for silence from the Indian forewarned her.

"We must not be seen together," he whispered. "But trust in me and everything will come out right. Walk on deck every night. The night before we land I will see you and tell you my plan for our escape."

With that the Indian darted away. She saw him slip down one of the narrow stairs to a deck, and there he was gone. Marjorie hastened to her cabin to think. Every night she came on deck, but Joe never came, nor saw she nothing more of Joe. Yet her father's words were always before her. She trusted the Indian. The sixth night she was on deck she felt a touch on her shoulder again. She had been so focused that the tread of Joe's moccasined feet was as silent as that of a cat.

"In the morning we land," the Indian announced briefly. "Go to your cabin. Before daylight I will rap three times on your door."

Marjorie did as she was told. She flung herself upon her bed without disrobing and fell into a fitful rest, at her door awakened her. It was Joe.

With whispered questions she learned how Joe had come to be on board. He had been in the rescue automobile which was wrecked by the leader of the Black Four. Fortunately he was unhurt. He held up a passing motorcyclist, commandeered his machine and followed the auto. Then he stowed away aboard as a stowaway and hid in the hold. None knew of his presence. Further than the fact that he was bound for the island of Taohoto and that Wright and Guthrie were on board the Indian knew nothing. But he suspected much and was determined to save Marjorie at all costs.

Dawn came. From the porthole Marjorie saw the green jungle of the island of Taohoto rapidly seeping above the Manzitata. The ship already was in the harbor.

"Our time has come," said Joe quietly. "Follow me."

The Indian led the way through the door. Franklin was there. An expression of incalculable surprise mounted the steward's face. He was about to cry out when a blow from Joe, by a swift movement, fell upon his head. With a handkerchief, thrust him into Marjorie's stateroom, and locked the door. The Indian and Marjorie sped to the deck.

"Leap in the life boat," Joe commanded.

Marjorie obeyed. Quicker than it takes to tell it, the Indian was in the craft beside her, manipulating the ropes and lowering the boat from the davits. Sailors were at the side of the boat, but they were a second too late. Joe had cut the ropes. The boat splashed in the water. The Indian piled the strength of his gigantic frame at the oars, and the little craft skimmed away over the surf.

Marjorie saw the disheveled figure of Roderick Wright rush to the rail. She heard his curses. He was foiled. Joe beached the boat a half mile from the ship, and, with Marjorie, plunged into the island jungle to elude their pursuers, who, headed by Wright, already were afoot.

The continuation of this highly interesting story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. Read it. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year.

* * *

Couldn't Swim.

A philosopher stepped on board a boat to cross a stream; on the passage he inquired of the ferryman if he understood arithmetic. The man looked astonished.

"Arithmetic? No, sir; never heard of it before."

The philosopher replied: "I am very sorry, for one-quarter of your life is gone."

A few minutes after he asked the ferryman: "Do you know anything of mathematics?"

The boatman smiled and replied: "No."

"Well, then," said the philosopher, "another quarter of your life is gone."

A third question was asked the ferryman: "Do you understand astronomy?"

"Oh, no, no, never heard of such a thing."

"Well, my friend, then another quarter of your life is gone."

Just at this moment the boat ran on a rock. The ferryman jumped up, pulling off his coat, and asked the philosopher, "Sir, can you swim?"

"No," said the philosopher.

"Then," shouted the ferryman, "your whole life is gone, for the boat is going to the bottom."

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A Rural Free Lance

By Frederick M. Holmes

BUSINESS was quiet in Gaston Center, and the proprietor of the general store tilted back in his chair, rested his feet on the railing of the stove, and perused the daily paper which had come in the evening mail. A stranger might have said hastily that business was not only quiet, but that it was stone dead, and that it was almost a crime to delay the funeral services. But Biz Bangs, as he glanced thriftily around at intervals at the two checker players; the three men watching them; at Jack Morgan, industriously whittling into the coal scuttle; and Hank Cole, drumming a mournful tattoo on the glass of the notion counter, continued reading with equanimity, confident in a resurrection at closing up time that would certainly bring over his counters some of the realm to the amount of sixty-five cents, and which might go as high as a dollar and a half.

It was while he was in this posture of ease, and enjoying to the full that alluring pleasure to be found only in a country store, that Mr. Bangs' eyes suddenly fastened themselves feverishly on a certain place in the newspaper, his mouth opened to an angle that threatened an immediate and hopeless case of dislocation of the jaw bones, and his feet clattered noisily to the floor, breaking up the quiet game of checkers and bringing all hands to their feet with a start.

"What the ——," began Morgan, who had narrowly escaped amputating a finger.

But Bangs cut him short with a "See there" and shook the forefinger of one hand excitedly at the paper, which he shook still more excitedly in the other, preventing all possibility of reading by anyone except a trained acrobat with superior eyesight. Then, seeing the great excitement he had aroused, and wishing to prepare them for the sensational cause, he broke out: "Boys, you all remember about Jake Binns, who went to the city six months or so ago?"

"Sure."

"How he got into that betting place and lost more than fifteen dollars in cash?"

"Ah-ha."

"And how, when he got out of there, he went out on the street and met a pretty blonde who said she knew him, and who was all set to do eating-house with him—you remember?"

"Yep."

"And you know how she had to go out for something just before they got through, and Jake never saw any more of her—and, what made him mad, never saw any more of what was left of his roll—over forty-six dollars?"

"We done do."

"And you know how Sam Parks laughed about it, and asked him all the circumstances, and all that we would go there and try it some day?"

"We knew all about it."

"And you know Sam went to the city yesterday morning?"

"Sure he did."

"Well, I'll be swanned if they haven't gone and done the same thing to him!"

"No!"

"Yes, they have; it's all here in this paper; you just listen. Mr. Samuel Parks, a prominent and respected citizen of Gaston Center, blew into the metropolis yesterday and started in to see the sights. In the course of his wanderings he entered a resort down near the river, where he was given an opportunity to invest some money on a betting game. Strange to say, Mr. Parks stopped with his first flyer, and came out a winner to the extent of several dollars. Somewhat elated with this achievement, he sauntered out on the streets and

"Where did you get that five hundred dollars?"

eventually ran across a pretty blonde, who appeared to know him. Parks could not just place his new acquaintance, but accepted her version of their previous meeting and, becoming friendly, acquiesced in her suggestion that they dine, leaving it to her to select the place. Under her guidance they went to an expensive place in the theater district, and Mr. Parks gave a most generous order. Just before the close of the meal, his fair companion took occasion to leave the room for a moment and, her absence becoming prolonged, the gentleman finally became uneasy and, upon investigation, found that a roll of bills amounting to five hundred dollars had disappeared from his pocket. By the time the Gaston Center man discovered the loss, the girl had had plenty of time to make good her escape; and he returns to his native wilds today, a sadder and a wiser man."

Mr. Bangs ceased, and looked at his auditors with the air of a man who fully appreciated the importance of the sensation he had produced.

There was an instant of silence, and then began a rapid fire of comment, with much perusal of the newspaper article. They were still at this when the door softly opened and Sam Parks made his presence was not noticed at first and he gave a slight cough.

"Sam Parks!" ejaculated Bangs, concealing the paper behind him.

"Yep," responded that individual, "I reckon it's me."

"Been to the city, haven't you?"

"Yep; went yesterday morning; saw you before I went."

"I know," rattled Bangs, "what kind of a time did you have?"

"Oh, so, so; pretty fair."

"Find that there betting place Jake found?" asked Hank.

"Yep, I found it."

"Heard you done 'em up," continued Hank.

"Who told you that?"

"Nem'mind; I know it."

"Well, I did, and that's a fact."

"Little blonde was too much for you, though, wasn't she?" inquired Morgan.

"What little blonde?"

Morgan reached behind Bangs, pulled out the paper, and shoved it under Parks' eyes.

"You may be pretty slick around here, Sam," he commented; "and you can poke a lot of fun at Jake Binns, but when you get to the city yourself, you'll get stuck, after all. This here paper's got the whole thing printed in it."

"Yep," admitted Sam, glancing over the article, "I reckon it has."

"How'd it happen, anyway?" asked Cole.

"Well," began Sam, slowly, "you know I thought I could beat that betting place, after what Jake told me. I didn't have any trouble in locating it, but just before I went in a young fellow asked me if I wasn't from the country. Said he was a reporter on a city paper, and told me he thought it would be a good place for me to go. I went in, and played the game and saw a fellow win a couple of twenties from a small bet. I pulled out my big roll, casual like; they didn't seem to notice it; then I shoved it down again and pulled out a half-dollar. Planted it; didn't get another right back. I acted as if I was thinking what my next bet would be, and then discovered I would have to be going, and slid out with the money and didn't bet no more."

"Well, you made good there, but how about the blonde?"

"I met her on the street soon after, and she looked at me and smiled, and then asked if I wasn't Mr. Brown. I told her my name was Parks. She said it was her mistake to be talking to—of—the other man when she spoke. She asked me if I didn't remember her. I told her I couldn't just place her unless she was that cousin who came to visit Mandy Jones summer before last. Say, she did she was the very girl, and we got to talking, and somehow the subject of eating came up, and we went to a swell place; and before we got through she made an excuse to step out, and she never came back."

"And your roll didn't come back, either, did it?"

"No, I reckon it didn't."

"What did you do?"

"I told the waiter, and he went to the proprietor, and they got the house detective, but couldn't do anything. I'd waited too long, you see, and she had got away. Then I talked about the bill—the girl had taken my roll, you see. Finally the proprietor told me he didn't want to have anything come up about his place, so he wouldn't say anything about the bill. Well, that was pretty good of him, but I told him it would cost me two dollars and a fifty-cent meal to get home. He seemed to be anxious to get rid of me, for he gave me a five-dollar bill and told me to keep the change. I went on out, and going down the street, I met that reporter fellow, and told me how it came on, and I told him I'd tell him for a dollar. He fell around a little and found out what he wanted to know, so he gave me the dollar and I told him. And then I came home."

During the time Sam Parks was telling his part Mr. Bangs began closing up for the night, and, talking over their fellow countryman's misfortune, the men bought their purchases and began filing out. Mr. Parks was passing out with them, when a whisper from the proprietor arrested him and he lingered.

Mr. Bangs fastened the front door, pulled down the blinds, and went back with Sam to the stove.

"There's just one or two things I'd like to ask you, Sam," he began, "assuming his most comfortable attitude.

"Fire away," responded Sam.

"This here reporter feller," says you were relieved of five hundred dollars, doesn't it?"

"Yep," was the laconic answer.

"When you went away from here yesterday morning, if I don't disremember, I loaned you three dollars to help you make the trip."

"Correct," replied Sam.

"Now, about this here Mandy Jones, whose cousin she was. I've lived around here as long as you have, Sam, and I've met just as many people; but I never met no Mandy Jones."

"Correct again," confirmed Sam, "I never did, either."

Mr. Bangs thoughtfully at Parks for a moment, and then inquired, "If you don't mind my prying into your personal affairs, Sam, I'd just like to ask where you got that five hundred dollars the girl stole?"

"Well, seeing as how you helped finance the trip, I don't mind telling you in confidence; and, by the way, here are the three dollars I borrowed of you. I didn't want to say too much before the boys, for if they saw I had money, Hank would have wanted me to pay that five dollars for the pig I bought last summer—and you know it wasn't worth over four-fifty. Now, I never said what kind of bills those five hundred dollars were; but they were old Confederate bills that were lying around the house and I wrapped a good one-dollar bill around the bunch to make 'em look better. Of course, my good money wasn't in that roll. I did really lose that one dollar," he observed, with a touch of pain in his voice at the recollection; "but I got another one from the reporter, and the reporter got his from the paper, and the paper got the story. And the story was true as far as it went, only," he mused, thoughtfully, "it didn't really go quite far enough."

* * *

Her Pie-Pudding.

"That's the third time," observed Mrs. Millsap, who was entertaining relatives, "that I've heard reference made to 'Mrs. Minkler's pie-pudding,' and it usually brings a laugh. Maybe there's any joke about it. I'd like to hear it."

"Well, I'll tell you the story," said one of the cousins. "Mrs. Minkler does the cooking for her family of four, and as she isn't in love with the science of cookery, it's very little in the way of extras the family gets. Mrs. Minkler says she considers 'apple sass and molasses' a good enough dessert for any one.

"Well, one day, for a special treat, she baked a pie for dinner, having a quarter piece for each member of the family. But when she was preparing dinner her sister-in-law looked into the kitchen and announced that two cousins had come over from Rushville to spend the day.

"'Shucks!' said Mrs. Minkler. 'Now I'll have to cut the pie into five pieces.'

"A half hour later two neighbors, Judge and Mrs. Peters, called, and Mr. Minkler asked them to stay for dinner, to which they agreed.

"'Mercy sakes!' grumbled Mrs. Minkler, 'now I'll have to cut the pie into eight pieces.'

"Just as dinner was being dished up, who should drop in but an old bachelor friend of the family from the other side of town, and he also accepted an invitation to take dinner.

"'Amanda Jane,' declared the exasperated Mrs. Minkler to her sister-in-law, 'I'll have to cut that pie into nine pieces, but I tell you now it won't stand any more cutting than that. If a single nine persons come here to dinner today, I'll squash the pie up, dish it around with sass on it, and call it a pudding.'"

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The Change in Erica.

(Continued from page three.)

nothing. He had no heart for the diversions that failed to distract; no eyes for the ladies who would willingly have smiled at him had he given them the least encouragement.

A great restlessness laid hold of him. He felt that he must travel—must escape the pain of old associations. He bought and fitted up a seagoing steam yacht that was the admiration of Hampton Roads. Formerly it had belonged to an American millionaire who had equipped it like a palace. It had all of the comforts of home and many little luxuries besides. It was trim appearing and had quite a reputation for speed. His highness, the Prince of Wales, even had considered its purchase.

Sir Andrew began a cruise of unfixed duration. He sailed the Atlantic, he coasted all along the Mediterranean Sea, even going a little way into the Gulf of Aden. Then suddenly he became tired of the tropics and the beaten paths of travelers. The whim took him to visit Scandinavia, the cold waters of the German Ocean. So he touched at many Swedish, Danish and Norwegian ports, and finally, late in the summer, when ennui had again gripped him hard, steamed between the precipitous cliffs and into the fiord overlooked by old Nils' cottage.

Forced to seek temporary shelter from the storm there, he had met Erica and when he left had carried away her image engraven on his mind. The spell of her smile had enwrapped his fretful soul in a soothing sense of such rest as had been unknown to him since that terrible day in the old Sussex churchyard. And she had said: "May the kind God keep you, sir." Sir Andrew could not forget that, any more than he could overlook the mental peace she had somehow cast around him.

He had intended to sail for England again in the morning, but now he hesitated. When his old Scotch mate came to see him about the time for starting, Sir Andrew countermanded the order altogether. Erica's kindly face held him there like a lodestar. Had he been a more superstitious man he would have said that he was bewitched. As it was he cross-questioned himself as to the possibility of his having fallen in love with the pretty girl.

"No," he sighed finally, "it is not that. It must be that there is something about her that reminds me of her who is gone. Yes, it is surely that which attracts me to her. I must see her again before I go."

Accordingly Sir Andrew invented flimsy pretexts to account for another visit to old Nils' cottage. He reiterated his thanks for their hospitality and since he was far too much the gentleman to offer them a money remuneration, he pressed their acceptance of a quantity of cured meats and canned stuffs from aboard his yacht as a slight token of his gratitude. The simple old couple were overwhelmed by his generosity, and felt very reluctant to accept the things.

Sir Andrew had hoped to see Erica at the co'tage, but in that he was disappointed. In response to his rather embarrassed inquiry as to her health, they said:

"Erica? Oh, yes, she is always well. She will be sorry to have missed you. She has taken a basket of eggs over to neighbor Svensson.

With the girl gone, the house lacked an interest for Sir Andrew. After a few desultory remarks he arose and took his leave. At the door old Nils said to him:

"You will be going away again soon, I suppose?"

Sir Andrew was unnecessarily confused by the remark. He was apprehensive that the old man should notice his confusion.

"I hardly know yet," he said. "Tomorrow, perhaps, or maybe the next day. I am in no hurry."

Then with another hasty adieu, he left old Nils and hurried down the cliff paths to where his boat was awaiting him by the fiord landing. He returned to a sumptuous but lonely supper on the yacht, heartily disgruntled over the results of the day. Moreover, he felt foolish at the thought that Erica's parents suspected the real cause of this second visit. But he stuck doggedly to his determination of seeing the girl again before raising anchor.

"Just once more, and then I'll go," he told himself.

This interesting story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

Injured Romance.

"It certainly looked as though Providence was helping us," said the woman who had just got back from her summer home in the country. "My youngest sister, Sallie, is at the romantic period that all girls live through when all you can do to save them is lock them up in a dungeon, and the law won't allow that! I've been so worried for fear she would marry that man! The trouble is he looks so attractive! But I knew the first time I laid eyes on him that if he lost his money his wife would be the one who would have to slave and economize instead of him. I felt it in my bones that if the coffee was poor he'd make her wish she had died when she was young and happy! But there wasn't a bit of use telling Sallie that! I even listened sympathetically when she raved over his taste in neckties, the superb fit of his clothes and the way he looked at one when he talked. And yet they say that girls should be allowed to pick out their own husbands!

"My heart sank when he came across the lake to visit us. Before his arrival I had hopes of John Derrick, who is so much everything that a girl should fall in love with thaat of course Sallie wouldn't pay any attention to him at all

"Gerald was quite the most beautifully got-up individual," continued the woman who had just got back from her summer home, "when he came out in his white flannels, that you could hope to see, and he bent over Sallie like a duke when he handed her anything. John had to go fishing alone that evening, because Gerald kept Sallie on the porch. He said he was surprised that she would ruin her hands with hooks and minnows and such things. That settled it! A man who dislikes fishing has a kink of some sort in his character. Sallie just sat there drinking in his monologue on higher art and the ethics of life and the poetry about her eyes. Meanwhile, poor John was down alone on the pier getting pneumonia maybe and mosquito bites certainly, with no one to sympathize with him. I could have slapped Sallie with good will. She murmured to me once when she was alone with me that what she most admired about Gerald was his beautiful ideals and exquisite sensibilities. She said his nature was so fine.

"John came back to our place to dump what was left of the bait in the minnow tub and to say good night, and then he went home to his cottage like a soldier, leaving Sallie on the porch with his hated rival. He remarked casually that he believed he'd start early the next morning on the canoe trip that he had spoken of and would be gone several days. I could see Gerald's eyes gleam with satisfaction, and Sallie seemed stricken dumb for a minute with surprise. However, she turned to Gerald the next second with a satisfied sigh that sent John careening off through the geranium bed, thinking it was the path

"Finally I called Sallie in and said it was getting late. Gerald said he believed he'd walk down to the pier and smoke a last cigar and he held Sallie's hand longer than he had any business to when he said good night. He also murmured that he should dream of her.

"I was nearly asleep when Sallie woke me. She said that there were queer noises in the yard below. We tiptoed to her window and listened. Now, you have to keep minnows in something big and we have ours in a tub out near the house. And the man who brought the load of stones for the rockery two days before had spilled them out near the same place. I could make out a white gleam and I whispered to Sallie that it must be Gerald returning. The white blot stopped suddenly with an awful 'Woof!' and I knew he had run into the strip of chicken wire stretched between two trees to keep pedestrians out of a flower bed. He tried again and banged into a tree. Then quite distinctly I heard his opinion of people who did not have electric lampposts and cement walks in the country.

"'My goodness!' Sallie gasped, in horror. 'Hush!' I told her. 'His exquisite sensibilities are hurt and you can't blame him!' Then he came on in the dark again carefully. He stubbed his toe over one rock that had rolled out from the rest, and swore. Then in two seconds he plunged headlong into all of them. The carnage was awful and the language illuminating.

"'Be quiet!' I ordered when Sallie moaned. 'What can you expect when his beautiful ideals get bumped that way?'

"Just as Gerald straightened up and struck out again he hit the minnow tub and went in head first. Those fish must have been surprised to shoot through the air as they did.

"Sallie was clutching me and weeping over his terrible temper, but I had presence of mind enough to remind her that his nature was very fine. Then I dragged her into a kimono and downstairs with me, because I wanted to complete the lesson. I had the lights on when Gerald finally got in. He looked like a cross bear and the victim of a steam roller and a drowning. I said sweetly we had come to see if he needed any help and then Sallie fled.

"She seemed sort of subdued during the rest of Gerald's visit and when John came back she literally fell on his neck. Yes, they're to be married at Christmas! Oh, mercy no! To John, of course!"

Too Previous.

An "Uncle Tom's Cabin" company was starting to parade in a small New England town. A goose ... farmyard near at band waddled to the middle of the street and began to hiss. One of the double-in-brass actors turned toward the fowl and angrily exclaimed:

"Don't be so dern quick to jump at conclusions. Wait till you see the show!"

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Here is a fine old-fashioned recipe for coughs, colds or catarrh trouble that is absolutely unequaled. Get from your druggist 1 oz. of Parmint (Double Strength) and add to it ¼ pint of hot water and 4 oz. of granulated sugar. Take one tablespoonful 4 times a day.

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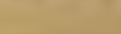

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BUT HE CAME BACK

Shorty—"We will stick that old scarecrow up in the corner at Devil's Curve—
the road and get it was you they hit, and we'll make 'em pay for hurtin' you!
—into his the scarecrow you get down in
—Hokey, skinney; he's comin' back for pay
—Why, dirt!—I must keep
—I won't upset in the big race
—and never until I learn it, so I

Antipathetic.

"Do you think their will be happy together?"

"Is it likely? He's an irregular dog and she's a regular cat"—Puck.

What Grumpps Never Saw.

Mr. Grumpps—"What boobies women are—always crying at weddings."

Mrs. Grumpps—"Not even the man women ... at a divorce, did you?"

A Modern Myth.

Teacher—Johnny, name some mythical creature.

Johnny—The goat were always afraid some one will get.

Indignant Protest.

What are your convictions on the question?" echoed Mr. Cumrox. "Why, I haven't even been arrested.

His Road.

A prosperous lumberman lives in western Pennsylvania. He owns a small railroad which runs from his lumber camp to the main line. It was riding the other day on a crowded car by the side of the president of the ——— Railroad. After some conversation, the president handed the lumberman his card.

"What!" said the Pennsylvania, "are you the president of the ——— Railroad? I am the president of a railroad, too."

"What is your road?" was the courteous reply.

"The M & A."

"Strange, I have never heard of it."

"Well," said the lumberman, "you may not be as long as yours, but it is just as wide."

Identified.

Dowager Lady Shelley was traveling by the mail coach, with her footman outside, when the coach was stopped.

The footman, suffering by his feet unhurt, heard his mistress' voice saying:

"John, pull me out the black trap."

A Glowing Description.

"This story of yours is all right," said the editor, "but your description of the hero's automobile is simply too solid. If there was an automobile made as fast as the one you describe, I'd buy one myself. We'd be in the world did you get your ideas?"

"Why, easy," replied the author. "I got my friend Brantley to describe his Wife—Could you call that a home run, Charley? Why, I thought you were at the ball game. Husband—I was, but I came for the last two innings and something told me that you were here.

Hiram's Ruse.

Hiram—"Haw! Haw! Haw! I shall have one of them city fellers that put the ... on my house."

Silas—"How did you do it?"

Hiram—"Why, when I made out the check to him, I just signed my name without specifying the amount. I'll bet there will be somebody pretty mad when he goes to cash it."

Dancing Men in Demand.

"Pa, what is a professional?"

"Why, my son, it is the name your grandma before——"

"Oh, I know now. It's the name for dance steps."

Their Responsibility.

An old lady was greatly frightened when the train thundered into the long tunnel. "Do you think," she asked the conductor, "this tunnel is perfectly safe?"

"Don't be afraid, madam," replied the waggish official. "Your company got you in this hole, and we're bound to see you through."

A Real Premium.

The tea companies were fighting each other for the trade of the town. The Tee Tea Company gave premiums with each pound of tea, while the Cee Tea Company did not. The result was that the latter concern was being pushed to the wall. Finally the Cee Tea people resolved that they must give premiums or quit.

So, after careful consideration, they decided to give a quart of milk with each pound of tea. Business picked up at once.

"I can't stand you give a quart of milk with each pound of tea," said a rival tea man.

"Why, that's easy," answered the manager. "I'm Mrs. Ketchem of Hedem & Screwem. We operate a string of tea boarding-houses here. I want 150 pounds of tea. Do I get 150 quarts of milk?"

"Why—er—I think so," stammered the manager. "Will you wait till I go back and look over the supply?"

It is needless to state that Mrs. Ketchem, he whispered, "I have thought up and I find that you will take 300 pounds of tea we can give you cheap."

No Doubt About It.

An adjutant had lectured a squad of recruits on the form of drill and movement, and wound up with this piece of advice:

"Remember that on the field of battle a brave soldier will always be found where the bullets are thickest, and every one of you knows where that is."

"Yes, sir," said one of the men, "it's in the ammunition wagon."

The Clever Maid.

Mrs Jellus (to prospective parlor maid)—I am afraid you won't do for me, you are——very good-looking, and you would bring an artist, a great admirer of female beauty, and——

Parlor Maid (interrupting)—Yes, ma'am, we have today——

Mrs Jellus—Yes—well, anyway. I will give you a monthly trial."

The Lion's Share.

Mamma—"Johnny, see that you give Ethel his fair share of that orange."

Johnny—"Yes'm."

Ethel—"Mamma, he hasn't given me any."

Johnny—"Well, that's all right. Lions don't eat oranges."

A Doomed Dog.

Customer—"I want to get a collar for my wife's poodle."

Dealer—"Something plain, sir?"

Customer—"No, something showy and expensive looking. I want some one to steal the little beast."

Duplicate Skulls.

"The collection here seems very incomplete," remarked Mrs. Newrich, going through the museum. "For one thing, I haven't seen a skull of Cromwell. They have a very fine one at the museum at Oxford, England."

An Author Explains.

Mrs Marigold—"How do you happen to be so much brighter than other people, Mr. Author?"

Mr. Author—"Well—er—you see the criticisms of my books make me smart."

Thoughtful Stillman.

"See here, Stillman, I don't think the milk you are giving me is pure."

"Madam, to the pure all things are pure."—Life.

Why He Couldn't.

Daily Reporter (to student in jail)—"Will you please give me your side of the story?"

Yell-ow—"I would like to, but I'm not at Liberty."

Her Only Excuse.

"Did you hear about Mr. Millyuns? He actually kissed Lu Rushbird good-by at the railway station."

"The simple old dear. She's hopelessly old-fashioned."

Just Like Him.

An elderly gentleman went into a photographic store and asked to see the proofs of a picture recently taken of a young man whose name he gave. They were handed to him as a matter of course, and he examined them critically. His face showed no sign of approval.

"These are of my son. This one is a remarkably good photo of him—it is very like him indeed. Has he paid for it yet?"

"No, sir," said the elderly gentleman, "very like him indeed."

It Could Not Fail.

At the bedside of a patient who was a noted hypnotist five doctors were in consultation as to the best means to produce perspiration. The sick man overheard the discussion and, after listening for a few moments, he turned his head toward the group and whispered with a dry chuckle:

"Just send in your bill, gentlemen; that will bring it on at once."

Lucky for Him.

A youth in chopping wood with a hatchet one day was unfortunate enough to graze the thumb of his left hand, with which he was steadying the piece of kindling he was splitting. Fearfully seeing at the injured member, he remarked: "Be gorra, it was a good thing that I didn't have hold of the handle with both hands, or I'd have cut it off for sure."

A Sure Way.

"Well, Freddie, did you learn anything at school today?"

"Yes, ma."

"What was it, my boy?"

"I got on to a sure way of getting out for an hour by snuffin' red ink up my nose."

Never Too Old to Learn.

Farmer Clodhopper—Has that city feller who bought Stone's farm learnt anything?

Farmer Sands—Well, he's learnt it don't do no good to try to make apple butter in a churn."—Judge

A Vision of Judgment.

Fuller was not at our boarding-house today," remarked the star boarder.

"How so?" asked the innocent waitster.

"I ate deviled ham and had angel cake for dessert."

Oh, That's Different.

"Your first husband must still love you?"

"Why so?"

"He tells me that he owes a great deal to you."

"He's referring to the back alimony."

The Unknowable.

Binks—Winkers is a great friend of yours, isn't he?

Jinks (a man of the world)—Can't say. I haven't had to borrow money since I knew him.

Beauty at a Discount.

Though beauty is extolled in books
Its influence is lost.
The uglier a bullpup looks
The more he seems to cost

Watered Stocks.

"Pa, what do they put water in stocks for?"

"To soak the investors with, my son."

About to Call.

"How do you like your new home in Hesterville, which had recently joined the ——— Leader?"

"Pretty well

"Have you called on your neighbors yet?"

"No," the newcomer admitted, "I haven't. But I'm going to if any more of my wood is missing."

Sentiment Given a Jolt.

Some days after the happy husband of a few months was about to leave home for the daily office grind, little wifey sailed into his immediate vicinity and gently placed a pretty hand upon his arm.

Darby, dear," she softly said, "haven't you a lock of my hair somewhere in your pockets?"

"I have indeed, sweetheart," was the prompt response of hubby, and he affectionately embraced the shaver of his scarce-any hair. "I have it right here in the pocket closest to my heart."

"I'm so glad," she delightfully returned little wifey. "Won't you please take it and wave and, presenting it to him with a look of proud satisfaction, she added:

"I got up all right and mended the—the—and now—" It looks almost as good as new."

Misdirected Energy.

A general, on his return from the wars, showed his family a regimental flag, pierced by seven or eight rifle bullets, which he had personally captured from the enemy. On the following morning the flag was to be presented to the Commander-in-Chief, and he called for the flag his industrious wife brought it to him smoothed and pressed, presenting it to him with a look of proud satisfaction, and

Needed No Warning.

A country magistrate, fond of the police force in Scotland, and in the course of a long career had committed very few offenders. Arrived at the police court, he ushered him into the retiring room, and remarked: "Mind the step."

"Never a man said the prisoner, with contempt "I knew the step afore he was born."

Safety First.

"What," asked a Missouri newspaper, "does Professor Squeers stand at the head of the class of mules?"

"He stands," said his town paper, "that is the only safe place to stand."

A Calming Effect.

Mr. Hurryup—"Oh my nerves of late a week we can get along swimmingly" Miss Hoidback—"I can't swim."

For Ladies Only.

Old Gentleman—"There is something about that coat machine in there it that——"

Lady Clerk—"That machine is for ladies only."

Where the Interest Lay.

"I heard that Mr. Van Wombat's essay on Shakespeare delighted all the ladies"

"It did, indeed It was written with pink ink on lavender paper and tied up with the cutest violet bows."

Sentiment Given a Jolt.

Some days after the happy husband of a few months was about to leave home for the daily office grind, little wifey sailed into his immediate vicinity and gently placed a pretty hand upon his arm.

Darby, dear," she softly said, "haven't you a lock of my hair somewhere in your pockets?"

"I have indeed, sweetheart," was the prompt response of hubby, and he affectionately embraced the shaver of his scarce-any hair. "I have it right here in the pocket closest to my heart."

"I'm so glad," she delightfully returned little wifey. "Won't you please take it and wave and, presenting it to him with a look of proud satisfaction, she added:

"I got up all right and mended the—the—and now—" It looks almost as good as new."

Needed No Warning.

A country magistrate, fond of the police force in Scotland, and in the course of a long career had committed very few offenders. Arrived at the police court, he ushered him into the retiring room, and remarked: "Mind the step."

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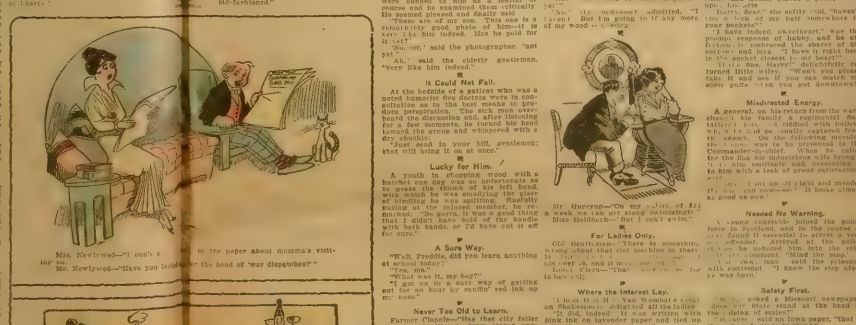
Safety First.

"What," asked a Missouri newspaper, "does Professor Squeers stand at the head of the class of mules?"

"He stands," said his town paper, "that is the only safe place to stand."

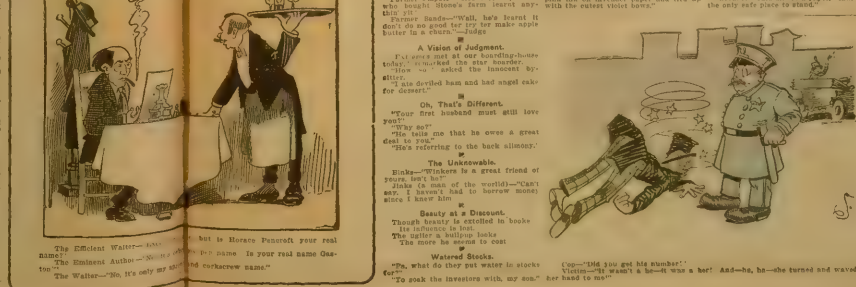
Silas—"What's become of that farm hand of yours the feller that said he led the charge at San Juan."

Hiram—"Him? Oh, he's in the hospital! He tried to lead a calf from the cold into the barn!"



Mrs. Newlywed—"I don't s... for us."

Mr. Newlywed—"Have you look... in the paper about mamma's visit... the head of 'war dispatches?'"



The Efficient Waiter—"... name?"

The Eminent Author—"... but is Horace Pencroft your real name. Is your real name Gosh... old cockscrew name."

The Waiter—"No, it's only my stage name."

The Underground Trail

Or, The Lair of the Mole

By Roger Knowles

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CHAPTER XXV.

CHIEF MINERNY and his two associates in the police department had trouble with their part in the plans from the beginning. It was difficult to coordinate with Lane. He communicated with them by telephone every day, but he could not tell them when to expect him through the cell wall. It was necessary, in the circumstances, to spell a constant, alert watch near the cell at night, for they must know the moment the two started through the tunnels. Much depended on their following at once.

Several features made the watch difficult and trying. It had to be conducted with universal secrecy; both Doe and members of the jail force must be kept in ignorance of it. Because the secret was wholly among themselves, one of the three important officers could not be compelled to function as watchman; he had to go and come without attracting attention, and his absence from the station must be satisfactorily accounted for. He had to know what was going on in Doe's cell without venturing to peep into it. Furthermore, all three were forced to remain at hand throughout each night, in order to be ready to enter the tunnels in pursuit at a moment's notice.

Wherefore the nerves and tempers of the three were in ragged condition on the early morning when Lane finally pierced the wall. Captain Woermser was on duty at the time. He had fallen out of humor with the entire affair, and was in a truculent mood toward Lane and the chief for enlisting in the mad-ap adventure.

From time to time, Woermser stole out from his hiding-place in the lumber room next the cell, made his way close to the barred front of it, and listened. It was not safe to do more than listen: if Doe should catch sight of him peeping, the whole scheme would be ruined. For his part, Woermser would not have been grieved by the failure, for he was game and loyal, and would do his best.

On a certain visit to the edge of the prisoner's cell, early in the morning, he thought he heard the gritting sound of bricks sliding apart. He pricked his ears, and held his breath. There was the noise or normal stirring within the cell, and the sound of the prisoner's breathing, but nothing more, although he listened long.

When he returned, half an hour later, he could hear neither the noise of the prisoner's normal stirring nor the sound of his breathing. He stood silent for a long time to make certain. Then he threw the light of his flash into the cell. It was unoccupied. Under the bunk he saw the yawning black mouth of the tunnel. He went immediately to fetch the others.

Five minutes later the three were inside the cell, armed, and provided with electric searchlights. They did not stand on ceremony, but crawled into the hole. They could not be sure how long Lane and Doe had been gone; it might be half an hour.

Woermser, taking the lead, crawled under the bunk, McInerny crawled head and shoulders after him; the assistant chief, on hands and knees, awaited his turn.

Woermser, squirming across the floor to the mouth of the hole, saw fit to enter it head first. "Hold on; face first," the chief counseled.

The captain of detectives was obstinate. He mumbled a rejoinder, and thrust his head and shoulders farther into the aperture.

It was Woermser's obstinacy that saved his life. He did not reach the charged iron plate at the entrance. Before he came to the first reverse curve in the leisurely letter S of Lane's tunnel, he became stuck in the bore. The turn took his head against his chest, and bent his back painfully. His elbows were cramped against his body, and his legs could find no purchase. He struggled blindly for a moment, wedged himself more firmly in the ground, and then uttered a bellow of panicky terror. "Get me out!" he yelled; "I'm smothering."

The others heard him, his jerking legs, bracing their feet against the wall of the cell under the bunk, but they could not stir him from the position in which he had lodged himself.

The situation was critical. In the first place, it was possible that Woermser was smothering, as he asseverated. But if they withdrew, two hours in which Lane would increase their lead; already they might be half an hour ahead. On the other hand, they called in help, they would disclose their secret and open the door to much possible trouble.

They did not long debate. Sending for a stone mason who was among the prisoners, they left him to extricate their companion, and started in the chase after Lane, entering the tunnels through a manhole. They had already lost many minutes through the misadventure.

It was well that they did not wait until Woermser was freed. The mason was engaged for two hours in aiding the removal of solid material from intimate contact with Woermser's body, before that official was restored to the atmosphere and a vertical position.

The masked Chief Marked McInerny and Assistant Chief Bartlett entered the tunnel system brought them in within a few yards of Lane, and him begins, the whole scheme would be ruined. For his part, Woermser would not have been grieved by the failure, for he was game and loyal, and would do his best.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

THE stimulus of finding such an unmistakable track of Lane sent them hurrying along the manway, their flashlights in constant play against floor and walls and ceiling in search of further signs. But their enthusiasm soon died out. The cross tunnel they followed from the pencil grew smaller, and pinched out in a tubular conduit. They stopped to consult. The circumference of the pipe passed through the conduit was quite as good as the chance that they had passed any other way; it might be the path that lead to the rendezvous. But they had little heart for crawling through it, under the pipes and wires. They turned back toward the center of the system.

Now and then, as they passed along, they wheeled off into other manways, for no better reason than to appease their consciences by a show of thoroughness in the hunt. Ten minutes of this, and they did not know where they were. They had neglected to bring a compass, although Lane had warned them to provide themselves. They were not lost with relation to the city; they had only to climb out one of the frequent manholes to the street to determine their position. But they were lost with reference to the place they had entered the conduits, and with relation to the place where they had found the remains of Lane's chemical pencil.

Their wanderings brought them to the closed door in the main tunnel. Bartlett saw it first, blocking off the rays of his flash, vanishing into the receding vistas of the square bore they traversed. His curiosity was only slightly piqued when he noticed the gate; he approached it perfunctorily.

The chief was impressed. "Quick! Open it!" he said "Will it open?"

They worked with the interlocking device for a moment, and freed it. The door swung under their concerted pull. With its giving came a rush of gas before which they retreated, heel first, staggering. "Good God!" cried McInerny. "Run, man, run."

The gas followed far; they were fatigued by exertion in a polluted air before they could catch a full breath. They did not stop, but fell into a rapid walk. At the first manhole they climbed into the street. They sat on the curb in the early morning to discuss the situation.

"It's no use," submitted Bartlett. "The kid has got to take care of himself. It's his own game, and he's got to play it out. It is up to him."

"What do you make of that door and the escaping gas?" inquired Chief McInerny.

"Nothing but a leak in the mains that they've shut off. They'll thank us for opening it."

"I don't think so. I think Doe turned on that gas and shut the door to head us off."

"Chief, you're in bad," said Bartlett. "If you come through this with your job left you'll be doing well. I don't want to be a cracker, but I'm only chance you've got is to quit this and get back to the office. Send out the alarms and sit close. That's the only chance."

"I don't like to throw Lane down," McInerny protested. "He's somewhere under the ground from that leak, and we ought to find him."

"Chief," returned Bartlett, "if there was any chance of finding Lane I'd go with you to the limit, you know that. But there ain't. The kid is in for it, but he can take care of himself. And if you don't get back pretty soon and cover up, Doe will be slipping through your fingers and getting out of town. You're taking too big chances, Chief."

"Perhaps you're right," admitted McInerny.

"Of course I'm right. You'd spend the rest of your life in these holes without getting anywhere. Doe has all the best of it. Get out the dragnet; that's the best you can do."

"I hate to leave the kid in the hole. What's the time?"

"Turn the whole force loose in the tunnels, and you won't be leaving the kid. It's a little after six."

The chief meditated. "I guess you're

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Wounded 97 Times.

What It Means in This War.

The men in this war of the nations are showing a devotion to country, which is as great and self-sacrificing as the patriotic devotion of the Japanese in 1904. A major in the French Army Medical Service was wounded ninety-seven times, and expects to go back to the front. The majority of the injuries are slight and men go back to the front and fight again and again. Courage is a matter of good blood and good digestion. More men are invalided home through sickness and the hardships of living in the trenches than are sent back on account of wounds.

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right," he said, reluctantly. "Where can we find a phone?"

CHAPTER XXVII.

LARRY M'GUIRE, night watchman for the gas company in the manway of the Consolidated Conduit Company, was not pleased with the aspect of things. He had "pulled the box" at a quarter to six, for a final report before quitting for the night, only to be told that there was a bad leak somewhere in the system, which he must find before he came up. As nearly as the office had been able to tell him, the leak was in one of the main tunnels that ran north and south through the length of the city, feeding the residence district.

With such directions as he had, Larry was rambling down the subterranean galleries, mumbling picturesque profanity under his breath and wrangling with himself over the probabilities of the leak: where it was, how serious, how it had been caused, and other features of a technical and professional character. Larry, being much alone, from the nature of his work, and being gregarious, from the nature of himself, had formed the habit of dividing himself into two distinct parts, and conducting animated and audible controversies between the parts. "'Tis like to be between here and K street, Larry all acoustics," said Larry, starting a discussion.

"K street, your foot!" observed Larry's fighting assistant, Jerry. "It will be between here and the gas works, ye splayfooted cousin of a Dutchman! Ye've as much feeling in a tunnel doin' this manner of work, as a woman at the polls. 'Tis only one way ye are likely to find where the gas is lackin', and that is be goin' the length of the tunnels one be one, with fire in the bowl of yer pipe. They may know be the hole in the street where Larry McGuire found the leak."

"Twill be of more service on the occasion if ye'll be so good as to close your mouth and open that nose of yours," Larry retorted. "'Tis not much for looks, but 'tis somethin' beautiful to smell with."

Bantering himself in this fashion, Larry McGuire arrived at the main trunk tunnel, in which three miles of pipes of the leak existed. He paused, turned his head up and down the manway, sniffing noisily for a tang of the escaped gas, pondered a moment, and swung off up the corridor, on a hazard.

He came upon the odor presently, acrid, insinuating. "D' ye smell that, now?" he asked, confidentially. "'Tis fresh, and no mistake. Ye're on the right track now, Larry, me boy. Who the hell closed that door"

The fringe of his dawn-pointing light had picked up and held into his sight the bottom of the first of the two doors that Doe, in his flight, had shut. Larry strode up to it, muttering his astonishment. He could not believe that any one from the gas works had arrived before him to shut off the section containing the ruptured pipes. The pungent odor grew stronger as he approached.

The fastenings of the door were properly adjusted. Whoever had closed it understood the mechanism. Larry took hold of the levers that clamped it in place, threw them clear, and pulled at the ponderous mass. It swung slowly ajar.

A rush of gas struck him in the face. It would have staggered one less accustomed to a vitiated atmosphere. With a quick cry he slammed the door together again, and threw the levers, clamping it. "Holy mither of Moses!" he exclaimed, holding his nose and backing away. "Will yez look at that, now? The door shut and the manway full to the nozzle."

Larry McGuire did not stop to debate with himself. There was one thing he wanted to know, and he moved to find out. He wanted to know how far underground that gas-filled chamber extended; whether the other end of it was closed off, and, if so, where it was closed.

Some men, in the circumstances, would have climbed out at the first manhole, traveled above ground to the next, and continued investigation from there. It did not occur to Larry to do that. He was more at home beneath the surface, where his work lay. He returned to a cross tunnel a few paces behind him, followed it for a block, took another paralleling the one containing the leak, swung up that to the next tunnel, two blocks away, and doubled back in it toward the manway he had left at the closed door.

Passing along this last tunnel, he detected the odor of gas again. It increased rather rapidly. Midway in the block it began as rapidly to diminish. Larry stopped short. "Praise be, is the whole system resting on pieces and springing leaks at once?" he ejaculated.

He turned back along the manway, traveling slowly, with his nostrils distended sensing the air. The odor increased again; he was entering the zone of its greatest purgency. He stopped abruptly. Experience told him that he was at its very core.

He ran his nose along the stringing gas pipes, searching for the scent. He was silent; his own familiar was banished when Larry McGuire was in earnest; and he was intently in earnest now. He was puzzled; his professional pride, and his curiosity, were piqued.

He followed each pipe, sniffing it minutely. The trail grew thin. He came back to the point where the smell was heaviest. The pipes were sound, but fresh gas was still coming in; that he knew.

He placed his face close to the wall, swinging it slowly back and forth along the surface of the cement, pausing the button of his searchlight and standing in darkness so that his one employed sense would be alone. With each swing, he hesitated at a certain spot. Presently his oscillation ceased; he sniffed long and sharply. A tiny crack in the concrete! such a crack, for instance, as appears between two leaves of a sliding double door. It was through such a crack that the gas was sliding.

McGuire's heart thumped with excitement. Here was something he had never discovered in all his journeyings back and forth along those miles of tunnels. Twice he swung his light along the line, bringing the two ends of it together in a rectangle. Unmistakably it marked a door.

Larry, all eager excitement now, pushed and beat against the door. It did not stir. Surmising that it might be controlled by a secret spring or lock, in keeping with its mysteriousness, he began a swift search for one. His eyes presently lighted on a little square stone in the face of the cement at one side, which seemed slightly detached and loose in its socket. It had a smooth, worn look, as though fingers had often pressed against it.

Larry McGuire's fingers pressed against it now, and in the same instant the mass included between the four lines that were traced on the wall sank away from before him and swung into a recess at one side, revealing to his amazed eyes a narrow passage free from pipes and wires; obviously one used for the purpose to which the tunnels were devoted.

A dozen strides brought Larry to a second door closing the bottom of the passage. The odor of gas was stronger here; so much stronger that it set him gagging. But he paid no heed to that. He was aroused by a pitch of curious interest that would have neglected more than that.

There was a handle on the door, but it would not yield to his vigorous pulling. He looked closely in the walls for a secret spring, but found nothing that seemed to be what he wanted. Two or three stones he pressed and [illegible] on suspicion, without result. Disconcerted by his failure, he braced [illegible] against the floor, preparing to give the door a challenging tug. Before he could distribute his weight in the effort, a plate toppled and sank under his feet, and the door swung heavily on its hinges, letting him to the floor as it yielded.

The rush of gas was overwhelming; he threw his hands before his face in defense against it. He was on his feet in an instant. He would have one look within, if he died for it. His lantern, cutting a square, white pattern out of the dark interior, slipped off in the sharp edges of its light a section of cloth, the skirt of a dress. Protruding from below the edge of it into the light were a pair of shoes, in the shoes were stockings, feet. They were horribly still.

Larry knew he was in the face of the deadliest, incapable of moving. The fact was so far beyond his wits that his will was paralyzed. But in the instant, in the next moment he threw himself down beside the body, half lifted it, and dragged it to safety. "Saints preserve us! Saints preserve us!" he was praying.

As he lifted it, he saw that the young woman was not alone. A man was sitting against the wall, immobile, limp; dead, for all that Larry could tell.

The gas was strangling him, but he kept his strength and gathered his scattered wits. Supporting the young woman to the outer gallery, he returned and brought the man out. Once clear of the door, he threw it to with a shut, checking the flow of gas into the gallery which they must traverse.

Fifteen minutes later the mild-mannered druggist at the corner of K [illegible] summoned from his bed by a prodigious hammering on his night door was flung to the last possible vefge of complete mental extinction by the appearance in the doorway of a wild-eyed, red-whiskered Irishman, who supported on one arm

(Continued on page [illegible])

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THESE WANT ADS CHANGE EACH WEEK

New offers come and go—old offers change—something new and different in each issue.

READ THEM THIS WEEK AND OFTEN

The Underground Trail.

(Continued from page fifteen.)

the limp body of Eleanor Horton, daughter of his most distinguished patron, and on the other that of the young man whose life could have been accepted by himself and wife as final and conclusive.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WHEN a wrenching pain in his chest, suggestive of an iron hand twisting away hundred of ribs, snapped Griswold Lane back into semi-consciousness, he was wholly unable to comprehend certain phenomena that impressed themselves on his reviving sensations. He could not understand, for instance, how it was that he had lain down to sleep against a hard stone wall in a dark room, and was awakening between sheets in a soft bed, with blessed yellow sunlight streaming into the room through windows. He could understand why it was no longer like lifting a ponderous mass of lead to draw breath, and why the air that now came so freely had ceased to afflict his throat and lungs with excruciating pain; or why each inspiration was not accompanied by searing through his limbs, which he remembered as numbed with oppressive fatigue, but which, although still held and covered with an insufferable acum, was no longer puffed until it choked his throat. He could grasp the significance of none of these things.

Soft fingers, moving with gentle firmness, made his head easier on the pillow. He opened blinking eyes and looked into the face of a woman in cap and white linen apron. She tried to understand why she was not Eleanor.

"How is she?" he mumbled eagerly, in a flood of relief.

The nurse turned a puzzled glance upon him. "Who?" she said.

"Miss Horton. The young lady who was with me."

"Oh! was there a young lady with you?" she asked.

Lane raised himself on a trembling elbow. "Isn't she here?" he demanded.

The nurse, who had been tardily awakened, began to repent lack of finesse. "I don't know," she answered. "I can find out, if you'll lie still until I come back."

"Hurry," begged Griswold, as she left the room.

She did not return. Instead, at the end of an interminable time, an interne came. "Where were you inquiring about?" he requested, with an elaborate professional air.

Lane told him. "She was with me when I lost consciousness," he explained. "Isn't she here? Is she all right?"

I can only tell you that she is not here," answered the youth. "Whether she was used to coaching, I—"

Lane took himself in hand with an effort. "How did I get here?" he asked. "Who brought me?"

"A man named McGuire; Larry McGuire. He said he was inspector in the Islands for the company."

"Did you see him?"

"Why, I escorted you."

"Was he alone?"

"Quite."

"Did he say anything about a young woman?"

"He seemed to have a great deal to say, but I left him with you. I was not only concerned in getting you under the pulmotor. Your condition was critical in the extreme. Five minutes more your case would have been hopeless."

"Did any one else in the hospital talk to him?"

"I think not."

"What time was that?"

"About eight, I think."

"What time is it now?"

"Nearly eight."

The young man equipped with a portable telephone that could be attached at the head of each bed. Lane asked for it, and the interne took it. He searched in vain for the name of Larry McGuire. Failing to find it, he called up the gas company, and got connected with the office out of which Larry worked.

"Is McGuire there?" he asked. He was quite calm now; there were things to be done, and done with the least possible delay.

McGuire was there; would the party like to talk to him? The party would, if it pleased. A rending wail, and Larry's voice crackled over the wire in a "Hello."

"Is that you, McGuire?"

"The very identity. Who's the identity.

"Well, this is the man you picked up and brought into the hospital this morning," Lane announced.

"Praise be!" cried Larry.

"Was there any one with me when you found me?"

"There was."

"A young woman?"

"She was."

"Was she still alive?"

"More so than you at the time."

"What became of her? Where did you take her?"

"Why, 'twas this way, now. Whin I dragged the both of you out of the nanny of hell, I brought ye into a drug store handy by, for lack of a better place, whilst I could send for the ambulance. There was a pale-eyed little Dutchman there runnin' the place, and he was like to have a fit whin he seen who she was. 'Praise be!' sez he; 'Tis Herkimer Horton's daughter. How did she ever come to this, and her father that rich and proud! 'Twould never do to send the likes of her to a hospital,' sez he; an' wid that he goes to the phone and calls up Mr. Herkimer Horton himself. I was of two minds about puttin' her into the ambulance anyhow, whin it came, but a car drivin' up here at the moment, and we was ready to start, I let be, she seemin' to be in fairly good order at the time, and you needin' help somethin' desperate."

Lane hung up the receiver.

This interesting story will be concluded in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

FAITHLESS FANNY.

Fanny fooled me, faithless, feckless,
Fair, factitious, false is she;
Fanny, unlovely, fooled me, luckless,
Fanny fooled me fearfully.

Full and fine the fate I favored,
Flattered by my fantasy;
Fact I've found with fiction flavored—
Fanny fooled me fully.

Fierce to follow, fired with fervor,
Fascinated, far from free,
Fared I forward to serve her—
Fanny fooled me flirtingly.

First she fixed and filled my fancies,
Fondled me, flowing free—
Fanny floated my finances,
Frosted my felicity.

Finishing the game is Fanny!
Pie upon her falsity!
Fanny, sweet as frangipani,
Fooled me with infinity!

HOW IT SPREAD.

Limpet (arriving home in the middle of the day)—"My dear, I've had a telegram saying I must go to Paris at once for the old farm if I come at once. So I'm off on the 2 o'clock train. Can't tell when I'll be back."

Mrs. Limpet—"Oh, goody! I hope it's sold this time! Then we can have the auto! I'll be so anxious—wire me if it goes through!"

Mrs. Next-Door (at 5 p. m.)—"Oh, how are you, Mrs. Limpet? I just run in to get that pattern for the crocheted doily you promised me. I'm in a hurry, just to see Mr. Limpet rushing out with a bag at noon! He seemed in a terrible hurry!"

Mrs. Limpet—"Yes, he was—er—called away on business. This is the way you do the second circle of the doily——"

Mrs. Next-Door—"Will he be gone long?"

Mrs. Limpet—"Oh, no. That is, I can't tell exactly. I hope not!"

Mrs. Next-Door—"Well, you just run in often so you won't get lonesome! It seemed so odd, his coming home for his bag instead of taking it with him in the morning if he were going away in a few hours!"

Mrs. Next-Door (to her husband)—"It's the queerest thing, John! Oscar Limpet came home this morning, as mad today about lunch time and in a few minutes rushed out of his house with a suitcase and down to the train! He looked awfully white, I thought! I went over to the house later—and Mrs. Limpet looked so queer, too. And she was mum as an oyster—tried to change the subject when I mentioned his going and stammered when asked when he'd return. And she pretended to be too busy crocheting even to look up! I hate to say it, but if she had been trying to conceal something she could not have acted differently! What do you suppose?"

Mrs. Next-Door's Husband (wisely)—"Well, you can't tell! Don't get so excited about it. Not that I've ever heard anything against Limpet, but he's got an awfully good quality of enamel! And he spends a lot of money on clubs. I shouldn't be surprised at anything!"

Mrs. Next-Door's Husband (on next morning's train, to his neighbor)—"Say, do you hear anything about Limpet's—aw—affairs? Some of his actions are a little—aw——"

Neighbor—"Never did like the chap! Didn't see him on the train last night—come to think of it!"

Mrs. Next-Door's Husband (low voice)—"No, didn't mention it, but he hurried home at noon yesterday, packed a bag and skipped. Let's see if there is anything in that——"

Mrs. Smith (speaking fast and hoarsely)—"You mustn't breathe it, for my husband would be so cross if he knew I repeated it—but he had it on the authority that Oscar Limpet is all tangled up financially and has fled the country! No, it isn't known yet! Mrs. Limpet just sits at home and never opens her lips. She did admit that she expected a telegram all the while and couldn't leave the house when I asked her to lunch! Telling where he is, I suppose! Isn't it awful?"

Chorus of Women—"Per-fectly dr-r-readful! I never did like his eyes!"

Mrs. Jones (one of the chorus)—"And she said that the Limpets are stranded without a cent—at least, he's skipped out and left her. She'll have to sell her diamonds to pay the grocery bill. I expect! He must have got away with thousands!"

Mrs. White—"I'll never have dressed it! Don't you remember how brussque he has been with her lately? I shouldn't be a bit surprised if there was another woman mixed up in it!"

Mrs. Jones—"My idea exactly! He——"

Mrs. White—"And Limpet has run off with another woman with the firm's money and his wife is starving to death and won't say a word, and how they keep it out of the papers I don't see! Private detectives, probably!"

Mrs. Black—"There are detectives watching the Limpet house because she admitted she expected a telegr—though if he has eloped I don't—why he should be eloping with Mrs. Limpet I say he beat her frightfully and has embezzled all the firm's money. You just can't tell about people!"

The Limpets, to seek later, on his return after concluding the sale of the farm)—"What on earth is the matter with every one? People certainly act queer when they are in nowadays!"

No Fish Wanted.

There was a man walking through a mountainous region one day selling fish. As he went along he called: "Fish for sale! Fish for sale!"

Going through a valley he chanced to look up and on top of a very tall mountain which loomed into the sky he saw a tiny hut, and closer his eagle eye seemed to discern signs of life. Being an ambitious and painstaking fish man, he settled his hamper of fish more firmly on his back and slowly climbed up to the top of the mountain. When he reached the hut he knocked at the door and a man came out, and he said to the man: "Any fish today?"

The man took his pipe out of his mouth, and looking over the dealer, replied: "No fish today."

The man went back down the mountain. When he had reached the bottom he happened to look up and he saw the man in front of the hut beckon to him. Once more he settled his fish hamper on his back and once more slowly climbed up to the top of the mountain. When he got within hearing, the man in front of the hut said to him:

"I don't want any fish today nor tomorrow either."

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COPIES WEEKLY.

GENTLE JABS

When in doubt button your lip.

Sooner or later the high flyer must pay up or come down.

Indigestion of the conscience is usually due to stolen sweets.

Yet the owner of a mule is never sure that he hasn't a kick coming.

Don't have too little confidence in yourself or too much in others.

If a man has a nagging wife, he knows all about silence that is golden.

Diplomacy is the art of getting what you want without fighting for it.

We would rather be held up by a stranger than thrown down by a friend.

A rich girl must be awfully homely if a young man would rather work than wed her.

If a man knows more than his wife it is up to him to keep her in ignorance of the fact.

He is truly a wise man who refrains from discussing religion, politics or self with his friends.

Sometimes a man has to be smart in order to make enough money to support his grown-up sons.

No man can love his neighbor as himself unless the aforesaid neighbor is a female of the species.

A newly married woman is easily entertained. All one has to do is to let her talk of her husband.

Many a man gets a reputation for being good-natured because he is too lazy to take his own part.

As long as a man is able to keep out of jail he thinks no other chap has anything on him in the way of goodness.

It may be as difficult for some rich men to enter the kingdom of Heaven as it is for them to keep out of jail.

Greater safety lies in leaving footprints on the sands of time than on the soil near the neighbor's poultry roost.

But, of course, a woman thinks she can play the piano well enough to entertain the kind of neighbors she has.

There are knockers enough in this great and glorious land of the free to beat all the swords on earth into fountain pens.

Beyond a doubt the telephone has conferred more benefits upon mankind than all the political orators that ever talked through their hats.

It takes a city man to figure out a fortune from raising chickens, but his figures are apt to go wrong because hens are not mathematicians.

Home and Health

Fashion Notes.

Buttons are still a fashionable trimming.

Beige and greenish khaki colors will be fashionable for spring.

The afternoon blouse should be made of chiffon, net, lace or silk.

Plaid skirts, cut in points, are worn with tight-fitting plain bodices.

Soft crepe meteor makes a useful and pretty frock for afternoon wear.

Very large sailor hats are shown—that is, very large in the crown.

The separate skirt has developed many gores—from five to twenty-four.

A great deal of silk will be used in spring costumes, especially white.

High, close-fitting choker collars are worn by women with long necks.

Petticoats that resemble Turkish trousers are called Turkish petticoats.

Some of the new suits in military effects are trimmed with nickel buttons.

Both wide and narrow girdles are correct, and ribbon belts have come back again.

Health Notes.

Ingrowing toe nails are usually caused by wearing shoes that are too short and narrow.

A sweetening and antiseptic mouth wash may be made by boiling cinnamon bark in water and straining it.

Apples are very healthful and should be eaten whenever obtainable. They are a great help for dyspeptic foods.

If care is taken to push back the cuticle at the base of the nails when drying the hands the nails will be kept in much better condition.

Five miles a day is not too much for a healthy person to walk, but those who have not sufficient strength should go only as far as is not fatiguing.

If possible, sit with the hair out and let it hang down your back for a few minutes each day. There is nothing better for the hair than sunlight and air.

A simple remedy for perspiring hands is made by dissolving half a teaspoonful of bicarbonate of soda in a small cupful of water. This lotion is to be mopped on the hands.

When bathing fresh air is essential, as the respiratory organs work faster when enjoying either a hot or cold plunge, and to shut one's self up in a small, close, steamy room without a particle of ventilation takes a certain beneficial stimulus away from the bath itself.

Recipes.

JELLIED CHICKEN—Line a pint bowl with slices of hard boiled eggs; fill with chopped chicken that has been seasoned with salt, white pepper, celery salt, and melted butter. Pour over it one cup of water in which one tablespoonful of gelatin has been dissolved. Set on ice.

DROP COOKIES—Mix two cupfuls of sugar with two eggs, add one cupful of molasses and half a cupful of sour milk. Add one cupful of raisins or currants (if raisins are used cut them small), one teaspoonful each of cloves and cinnamon, half a teaspoonful of soda dissolved in a tablespoonful of hot water, and six cupfuls of flour. Mix all together well and drop from a spoon on a buttered tin, having the cakes some distance apart. Sugar and bake in a slow oven for fifteen minutes.

EGG AND CHEESE DISH—Poach three eggs in half a pint of rich cream. Remove the eggs carefully and place them on slices of buttered toast. Add a dessertspoonful of American cheese (grated) to the cream, with a pinch of salt and a little cayenne pepper as seasoning. Allow the cream to simmer until the cheese has dissolved, then pour it over the eggs and toast and serve immediately.

For the Housewife.

Whip cream in a pitcher instead of a bowl to do it in half the time and without spattering.

Glue a tape measure firmly across the front edge of your sewing machine. It saves much time when sewing.

A dampened cloth placed on the bottom of a pan when a cake sticks to the pan, says an exchange, will cause the cake to steam loose in a short time.

Window glass should not be cleansed with soap, as this treatment renders the glass cloudy. A little borax, pearline, or household ammonia may be added to warm water.

A splendid shoe polish can be made by making a thick mixture of lard and soot. After rubbing a small quantity on the leather little "elbow grease" will be required.

To drive away red ants scour the cupboards of their haunts out thoroughly with hot water and soda, and place upon the shelves or near the spot frequented by ants a few sprigs of ground ivy. As a rule mignonette will generally scare away black ants; the ammonia is more effective for the red.

Sick Room Don'ts.

Dont allow the sheets to become wrinkled.

Don't jar the bed by leaning or sitting upon it.

Don't allow stale flowers to remain in the room.

Don't forget to be kind and patient.

Don't have temperature of sick room over 65 degrees.

Don't appear anxious. Those who are ill are very sensitive.

Don't rattle papers. Nothing gets on one's nerves more than this.

Don't give the patient more water in a glass than he is allowed.

Don't allow the room with fresh flowers.

Keep one or two bouquets in the room at a time. Change every two or three hours if you have a great many.

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Ted of the Hills

Or, Fighting Cattle Thieves

By Annie Brownlee Quimby

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CHAPTER IV.

MRS. MORGAN tidied up her small kitchen, then rolled a couple of sandwiches in a waxed paper, and left a lunch on the table for Ted. Then, tying on her sunbonnet, she mounted Bessie and rode away around the rim of the mountain, following a bridle path that led down into a thickly timbered gulch where the valuable hardwood trees attained a luxuriant growth in the shade of the giant redwoods.

Meanwhile, Ted, mounted on a little bay saddle pony, called Dan, was loping easily along toward the grazing grounds near the timber in the gulch. Riding to the top of a steep knoll, he scanned the rolling valley land for some sign of the steers, but they were not in sight.

"Dog gone it!" Where do you suppose they have gone, Cap?" But Cap only shook his shaggy head, his tongue lolling, and looked wise, but said nothing. "They might be over behind that stump of timber, Cap. Let's have a look," and he headed Dan for the timber, keeping a sharp lookout, meanwhile, for signs of roving steers. He circled the clump of scrub pine and tamarack, but there were no cattle in view. He sighed as he rode saddle and strained his eyes into the distance. If they were within a radius of two miles he would see some signs of them. But all he could see was a succession of small knolls and patches of hazel bushes and bright green vines.

"I'll ride around by Bear Creek and see if they have been to drink lately," he said, thinking aloud.

In the soft earth at the side of the steepy little creek there were a number of cattle tracks, but they were two or three days old. Ted was puzzled. What could it mean? Surely the rustlers would never dare come almost to his door and drive his stock away? If it was during a heavy winter rain it would be different. They would depend on the rain to wash the hoofprints out. After riding around for a couple of hours on a fruitless search, Ted saw a lone smoke in Bare Ridge to a point where a thin curl of smoke was rising above the treetops. "I believe I'll go and see if Silver Bar may be able to tell me something of them, or advise me what to do. He seems to to know pretty nearly everything. Perhaps he'll give me a cup of coffee, and maybe he'll ride over to Uncle Edward's and see if he has got home, as he thinks of it." So Ted's mind ran on. He wheeled Dan into a narrow bridle path that led across the creek, and up a tortuous, winding trail that led to old Silver's lonely cabin, on the side of Lonesome Ridge. As he drew near the cabin, the old man came out, his long white hair almost reaching his shoulders, his snow-white beard spread over his shirt front, and between his lips a time-blackened corncob pipe. Standing there in the sunshine, with the breeze playing through his hair and beard, he presented a striking appearance. The keen old eyes that had still retained something of the fire of youth, and the high intellectual brow made him a type seldom met with in the hills.

"How are you, boy?" he said, his eyes brightening with pleasure. "I've been watching you for the last hour and wondering if you'd ride up to see me."

"You saw me on the range, then?" Ted asked curiously.

"Yes. I didn't know who it was at first, but I got out my glasses, and then I recognized Dan and Captain, and I knew it must be you."

"And I was fully two miles away. You're a wonderful man, Silver," Ted cried admiringly.

"Not at all, son! Not at all! I'm just a common, everyday sort of an old chap," but his eyes lingered lovingly on the boy's face. "Step up, sunbonnet, she there's feed there for him. And come in, boy. I was just going; to make a cup of coffee, and I'll be glad of your company," he said.

"And I'll be glad of your coffee, Silver. I've got an appetite big enough for half a dozen people," Ted laughed.

"That's right. Any healthy young man riding all morning in the air would have an appetite."

Dan was turned loose in the yard where a satisfying layer of hay awaited him. Ted washed the grime from his hands and face, in the basin on the bench by the cabin door, combed back the wavy hair, and followed the old man into the cabin. Cap followed and stretched himself on the rug before the stove, a luxury he never dreamed of indulging in at home.

Silver's cabin was a substantial two-room structure, built of small pine logs, with the round sides hewn flat. Inside the walls were covered with draperies and skins, until the rude logs were almost entirely hidden. In one corner was a small cook stove polished like a mirror. The floor was covered with linoleum. The windows were draped and nished with shades and draped with heavy lace curtains. There was also a dining table, chairs, an oven, and a small glass cupboard, and a miscellaneous collection of cooking utensils. Beside the cabin door, overlooking Lonesome Gulch, was a comfortable Morris chair with a small table beside it, upon which was a large profusion of downy-looking cushions, a chest of drawers and a mirror stood near the bed, and on the other side a desk occupied an advantageous position near the window. On the walls were a number of magnificent oil paintings. The end of the room opposite the bed was covered with tier after tier of books. Those books at once the joy and the despair of Ted's heart. The walls of this room were covered with rich tapestry and the skins of wild animals. The floor covering was a green velvet carpet, which gave the effect of soft moss. The windows were hung with heavy, rich curtains of almost priceless value. The books were to Ted a rich source of delight to Ted, and his secret ambition was to duplicate it in the new home he and his mother had planned for so long.

Silver deftly laid the table for two. The odor of coffee and fried ham was pleasing to Ted's sense of smell, and the anticipation of the pleasure of eating was strong upon him. He was a healthy, normal boy, with a boy's outdoor appetite.

"Were you looking for stock on the range?" Silver asked after he had helped Ted to a generous plate of ham and a couple of baked potatoes. "I saw you riding about as though looking for something."

"Yes. You know that bunch of steers that I told you about, that's been grazing down in the flats near the big redwoods?"

"Yes, that's the herd that's to build the new house, isn't it?" the hermit asked, smiling.

"That's what mother and I planned all along, but they are missing this morning. I was looking for them the last day or two. Uncle Edward says the rustlers are getting busy again, and I'm just a little worried about that bunch. You see, they mean so much to mother and me, that I suppose I scare easy."

During the recital the old hermit laid down his knife and fork and scanned the boy's face closely. The jaw seemed to square beneath the thin white beard, and a steely glitter sprang into the old gray eyes.

"You don't really think that the rustlers got your steers, do you?" he asked anxiously.

"I hardly know what to think. When I rode over here three days ago they were feeding quietly near the timber. They never have wandered far and were a particularly quiet lot."

"How many were there in the bunch?" Silver asked.

"Twenty-eight and all four-year-olds."

"Quite a little prize for the rustlers to get hold of. I think I heard some one say that you intended to sell them soon."

"Yes, we thought of selling them in a few weeks now."

"I suppose you expected them to bring a pretty good price. They ought to be in good condition, as the land is fine and plenty of water."

"They are in good condition for the market any day. I don't think the rustlers have got them," he said doubtfully. "I think most likely they have wandered into the hills."

"How much did you expect they would bring you, boy?" the other asked, without heeding Ted's doubts.

"Uncle Edward said not to take less than eighty-five dollars a head for the whole herd."

"Let me see, twenty-eight eighty-fives," Silver said, pausing to do a problem in mental arithmetic.

"That would be two thousand three hundred and ninety dollars," Ted volunteered.

"You've figured it all out, I see," Silver smiled. "Quite a nice little sum for that new house, boy," he observed thoughtfully. "Has any one around here been selling cattle lately?"

"Not that I know of, though, of course, they may have," Ted replied, wondering why the old man should ask.

"How about the people on the next ridge? The Beatties and Mullens, I mean."

"The Beatties have no cattle to sell this fall, but they have quite a number of sheep, I believe. I heard Mose Mullen say they had no more stock to sell this fall. They sold quite a bunch early in the summer."

The old man's eyes shone curiously. "That's strange," he muttered, more to himself than to Ted.

"What's strange?" Ted asked.

"Oh, I was just thinking it was strange the Mullens had no stock to sell this fall," he replied, without looking up.

"I think I go on up the trail to Uncle Edward's, and see what he thinks about the steers."

"You'll take a look through the timber, I suppose?" Silver asked.

"Yes, I'll ride through the timber tomorrow, and I'll find them or some trace of them before I give up," Ted said determinedly.

"Brave boy!" the hermit exclaimed. "I wish I were able to help you some. I'll be on the lookout anyway. You have them properly branded, I suppose?"

"Yes. Uncle had his men brand the bunch for me," he replied.

"What is the brand?"

"M. X. is my brand. Well, I must be off. I'll see you again soon, Silver."

"That's right. Come any time you can, be sure! I wouldn't worry too much about the steers if I were you," the strange old man called after Ted.

CHAPTER V.

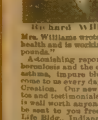
TED took the short cut up Lonesome Gulch, and across the ridge beyond to his uncle's ranch on the other side. The woods were alive with interesting things, but Ted was too worried to enjoy them today.

A blackbird flew low, crying, "Tchenk, tchenk," and he made the other side of the trail answered "Tchenk, tchenk." A crow, perched on a limb, cocked an inquisitive head sideways, and cried "Now Caw!" and disappeared among the trees. As he was slowly ascending the ridge a quail left timber whistling "Bob White! Bob White!"

Captain was enjoying himself if Ted was not. A rabbit broke cover, and the race began. From a safe position on an overhanging limb, the little furry rascal chattered down at the dog, hurling defiance in his teeth, and Cap would answer back in his dog tongue, until the woods rang with their noise. A jack rabbit scurried across the trail, and Captain reluctantly left the squirrel to pursue his new find, always coming back to Ted a little farther along the trail, with mouth open and sides heaving. Failure to secure what he sought daunted his spirits not at all. If he failed this time, he would succeed the next.

As Dan loped up the road to the ranch house, the door of the house was thrown

From Shadow of Grave Youth Returns to Work



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open, and a trim, sprightly little woman in blue gingham came out on the porch.

"Hello, Aunt Margaret!" Ted cried.

"Why, hello, Ted! Ain't you coming in?" she asked.

"I think not. I just ran over to see Uncle Edward. Has he got home yet?"

"Oh, yes, he got back about an hour ago. I think you'll find him in the barn with Pete and Jim. They just came in off the range."

"I'll go and look him up then," Ted answered, swinging Dan around toward the barn and corral.

"How is your mother, Ted?" Aunt Margaret called after him. "Tell her to come over as soon as she can and spend the day with me."

Ted trotted smartly around to the barn, for he had just noticed that the sun was drooping well toward Lonesome Ridge.

"Why, hello, Ted! Where did you come from?" Uncle Edward called from the corral gate. "I supposed you'd be down on the range rounding up that bunch of steers!"

"Looks like there are no steers to round up," Ted replied. "I rode up and down the range all morning, but I can't find trace of them," Ted hurried to explain.

"The devil you can't!" Edward Morgan cried, taking off his hat, and running his fingers through his thick, wavy hair which resembled Ted's closely. "When did you see them last?" he asked sharply.

"Three days ago. They were then feeding quietly well up toward the timber."

"You're sure they're not in behind a bunch of willows somewhere?"

"I'd have seen them if they were, for I rode back and forth for three hours. They may have wandered into the timber," he said doubtfully.

"They're not in the timber," the other replied with a decisive shake of his head, and a frown gathering on his face. "Cattle won't leave good grass to wander into heavy timber where there is no feed. It's very queer how cattle are disappearing anyway!"

"You think they have been driven off, then?" Ted asked anxiously.

"It looks like it. It does, sure," he was thinking hard. Glancing at Ted he noted the anxious look on the boy's face. "Don't worry about them, Ted. They may turn up in a day of two. I'll send Pete down there first thing in the morning, and if they have been driven off, he'll find some trace of them."

As Ted rode off toward home, with Captain trotting quietly at Dan's heels, Ed Morgan leaned his elbow on the corral fence and watched the boy out of sight.

"D—n it!" he cried angrily. "Isn't there cattle enough in the country for them without taking the few head belonging to that boy and his mother?" and he gripped the rails hard. "I'm sometimes tempted to think I'm not strangers that does it, either."

A small bow-legged little man in a blue flannel shirt and a red bandana handkerchief knotted about his neck, a soft wide-rimmed hat pulled rakishly to one side came into the corral.

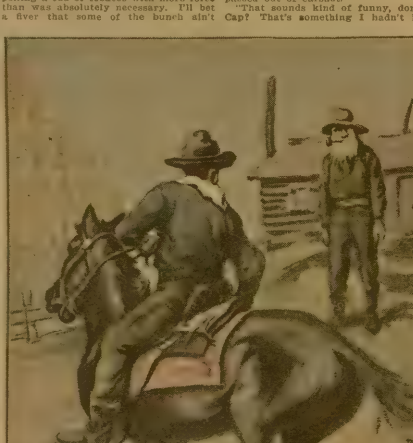
"Hey, Pete!" Morgan called, "come here," and the little bow-legged man came rolling awkwardly toward him.

"You seen that kid ride away?" Morgan asked, and the other nodded. "Well, he's lost that bunch of steers that he and his mother raised on sucking bottles. Do you get me?"

"Sure thing," the other drawled. "That's Ted Morgan that lives with his mother over on Bear Ridge."

"Exactly! Well, that bunch of steers means a mighty lot to them, and the cattle thieves have driven them off. What are we going to do about it, Pete?"

"Find 'em," the other drawled, expelling a cud of tobacco with more force than was absolutely necessary. I'll bet a fiver that some of the bunch ain't



"I've b-en watching you for the last hour."

strangers in these parts, either. They seem to know the layout pretty well," he went on, hitching up his fringed trousers.

"Just what I've been figuring, Pete. But how are we going to find out?"

"We'll catch 'em yet. No man can keep on stealin' cattle, an' escape. Oh, yes, we'll catch 'em, sure," and he smiled suggestively.

"Well," the other drawled, "it'll not be exactly healthy 'round here for a while. They'll find the atmosphere not exactly suited to their constitutions."

"I hope they won't be too long in finding out, Pete. Otherwise, a good many of us will have nothing left but the land and they'll soon begin to steal that, too."

Pete nodded. "Before that time comes there'll be something doin' 'round here, and there'll be some mighty sick cattle thieves in my mother never christened me Peter Dellel. I've got a good-sized mud spot against them rustlers. I have, sure!"

"So have I, Pete, but I don't know as that'll help me any. It's a devilish lowdown thief that'll steal from a woman and boy!" he cried.

"It sure is, and you can bet your lamps on it, the guy that would do that hasn't got brains enough to make a clean getaway. That fellow won't know when to stop."

CHAPTER IV.

AS TED was hurrying homeward he heard voices coming down the trail. The voices grew more and more plainer. It was evident that the speakers were afoot. Something in the sound of the voices made Ted dismount and lead Dan into a thicket of bushes. With one hand on Dan's bridle and the other grasping the strap around Captain's neck he waited for them to pass. The trail sloped ahead for about fifty yards. An owl hooted upon the rim of Bear Ridge and a squirrel barked in a nearby tree, but Captain remained silent, obedient to his master's commands. The voices came nearer; then two men and a dog came around the bend in the trail. It was Rover and the two Mullen boys. Captain gave a low growl and the hair rose on his back like porcupine quills. But at Ted's "Down, Cap!" he sank crouching on the ground, watchful and anxious.

"Sam's not on the square, I tell you, or he'd 'a' paid what he agreed to when we handed them over. We've nothin' to do with gettin' 'em out," one of the Mullens grumbled.

"Sam's all right, but he's runnin' an awful risk."

"We're all doin' that," the other growled.

Ted could hear no more. They had passed out of earshot.

"That sounds kind of funny, don't it, Cap? That's something I hadn't heard of before. But I guess we didn't get enough to understand."

Darkness was falling fast when Ted rode into the yard and dismounted before the kitchen door.

"That you, Ted?" Mrs. Morgan called from the kitchen. "What keep you so long? Did you have trouble with the steers?"

"I couldn't make it any sooner, mother. I thought I'd ride over and see Uncle Edward before coming home."

"You must be starving, son. Supper will be ready in a minute."

"Oh, I had dinner with Silver," Ted replied. "But I'm ready for supper just the same."

The tinkling of a bell came faintly out of the purple shadows. Ted listened wonderingly. "That sounds like the sheep bell," he thought, unbuckling the saddle girth. The silvery tinkling of the bell was coming nearer. "Is some one driving up the sheep, mother?" he called to the kitchen.

"Yes, Nancy said she would bring them in, as you were so late getting home."

"Oh! It's Nancy, eh?" and the boy's face lit up, but he led back to the kitchen door.

"Nancy is going to stay with us tonight. Her mother and father have gone to sit up with a sick neighbor across on the next ridge," Mrs. Morgan explained, watching Ted remove the bridle from Dan and turn him into the yard.

Ted met the girl at the gate of the sheep corral.

"By gee! That was thoughtful of you, Nancy," he said.

"That's nothin'," she replied, but the

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red showed through the tan. "What kept you so long? Your mother has been looking for you for the last hour."

"I rode over to see Uncle Edward about the steers, and I must have stayed longer than I thought."

Something in the voice made Nancy look up sharply.

"Did you get the steers all right?" she queried.

"No, I didn't. That's why I went to see Uncle Edward. I can't find that bunch, or any trace of them, either," he said dejectedly.

"You don't think they have been driven away, do you, Ted?" she asked quickly, unconsciously coming a step nearer to him.

"Yes, I do. I can't explain it any other way. It'll be hard on poor mother, though. You know she raised some of them almost like babies," and his face hardened.

"What about poor Ted?" she asked quickly. "If I ain't mistaken, you've been pretty near four years tendin' that bunch that they're not gone," she said with conviction. "No man livin' would steal them steers after the way you have tended 'em," she said with eyes flashing.

"If no living man has stolen them, no dead man has, either," and they both laughed. "Pete is coming over in the morning to try and take up their trail."

"I wouldn't worry about it, Ted," the girl said, coming close to his side, and slipping one little hand upon his shirt sleeve. "Cattle sometimes take queer turns same as humans, and went it. To what lies beyond the farthest hill."

Ted's big, muscular arm stole tenderly about the girl's waist, and his face shone with the light of a pure unselfish love.

"What do a few steers amount to, anyway?" he said lightly. "You're still my girl ain't you, Nancy?" he asked.

"I wouldn't be anybody else's girl for the world," she replied, and snuggled close to his shoulder. "You didn't really mean it when you were sweet on Nellie Simpson, did you?"

"Not a bit of it. I just did it because I got that Jim Mullen talk to you," he replied.

"And I just pretended about Jim to see if you'd get mad."

"We won't talk about it any more, then," drawing her to him and kissing the upturned face earnestly.

"Ted!" Mrs. Morgan called from the kitchen door, striving to peer into the gathering shadows.

"Yes, mother, I'm coming."

"Hasn't Nancy come with the sheep yet? I thought I heard the bell."

"I'm here, sheep and all," Nancy answered.

Understanding dawned upon the mother, as she smilingly returned to the kitchen stove. "I might have known," she mused. "But it seems so long since I was young myself, I must have forgotten."

When Ted and Nancy entered the kitchen, the former paused in the doorway and sniffed the odors curiously.

"What is it, Ted?" the mother asked.

"It's fried chicken," he said, his lips working in delighted anticipation, "and I think it's one of my big Plymouth Rocks."

"It wasn't hard to guess, was it, Ted?" Nancy laughed.

"Not after you got a good whiff of it."

After supper Ted went out and sat on the bench by the kitchen door, and smoked his corncob pipe, while Mrs. Morgan and Nancy cleared away the supper dishes.

When all traces of disorder had been erased from the tiny kitchen and the dishcloth had been scalded thoroughly and hung on its own particular pin, the three went to the small shed which Mrs. Morgan used for drying her herbs. The herbs and roots gathered that day were carefully washed and sorted and spread on separate trays to dry.

"How is the ginseng coming on, mother?" Ted asked.

"Fine, son, fine!" she cried with enthusiasm. "It will be ready to gather in about ten days, and so much of it! I had no idea there was such a quantity," she said earnestly. "With the money the ginseng the steers will bring, and what I will get for the ginseng, we will be feeling like millionaires," she laughed.

"I am glad your ginseng is turning out well, mother, for you spent so much time and labor on it, and have waited so long." He tried to speak carelessly, but a wistful note crept out in his voice.

Nancy coughed, and then began to sing softly, but the mother would not be lured away from that wistful note in her boy's voice. She searched his face keenly.

"Did you have any trouble driving up the steers?" she queried, wondering what was troubling Ted.

The boy did not answer at once. He hesitated to tell a falsehood, and he did not want to tell the truth. He hoped that his mother would not press the subject until after Pete had gone over the range, and he heard his opinion.

"Something is bothering you, son. What is it?" she asked kindly.

"I suppose I may as well tell you. Since you have guessed that something is wrong, I can't find the steers," he said meekly.

Mrs. Morgan paused in the act of spreading a tray of pokeberries to dry, and a shadow of disappointment spread over her face, but was quickly dispelled by a beautiful smile.

"Don't take it so hard, Ted, that bunch of steers doesn't make all of life for us. If any one needs them more than we do, they are welcome to them. I shan't lose any sleep over them, and I'd advise you not to, either," she said calmly.

"Mother!" Ted cried in amazement, "I thought the loss of those steers would just about kill you," and his voice faltered a trifle, while his arm stole about his mother's plump shoulders. "I always knew you were splendid, mother, but I never knew just how splendid till now," he cried joyously.

"Why, Mrs. Morgan, you're as gritty as a man and more than lots of 'em. I saw old Thompkins cry like a baby when his cow broke her neck goin' through a brush fence, and she wasn't the last one, either."

"The only thing that would make me cry, Nancy, would be the loss of my big boy, here. That would be a sorrow indeed," patting the brown cheek.

"Huh!" Nancy said, scanning the pair with eyes that were bright with affection. "I reckon there's not much danger of that, mother. I always heard my mother say that the worst thing you could do was to let a man see how much you thought of him. I believe you don't care," with a mischievous twinkle in her eye.

Mrs. Morgan smiled. "I believe that is a pretty good plan as a rule, but my method is better, Nancy."

"Perhaps he's the kind you can't spoil," Nancy retorted slyly.

"That's true, and you can't spoil Ted," the mother said fondly.

"No, you can't spoil a bad egg," Nancy laughed, and Ted and his mother joined her.

"It isn't even safe to crack the shell, is it, Nancy?" Ted said maliciously. "But what about the new house if the steers are really gone?" Ted asked, addressing the mother.

"We'll have the new house just the same, son, I have never told you, but I have done a little dealing in the bank, saved from the sale of my herbs. By the time I have harvested by ginseng, I will have a nice little amount to add to it, and you know, we don't want a mansion, we wouldn't know what to do with one, would we?"

This interesting story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.50, and you will never regret it. Let us heard from you at once.

* * *

EILEEN.

I saw a pretty girl in red,
With waving plume and tossing head;
A perfect queen of fashion's sway—
The prettiest girl I've ever seen.

I saw a pretty girl in blue,
Excelling everything in view;
A handsome girl of sweetness—
The prettiest girl I've ever seen.

I saw a pretty girl in white,
A vision walking in the night;
With sunny locks of golden sheen—
The prettiest girl I've ever seen.

And yet she's very much the same;
She'll change her dress, but not her name;
A glorious coquette, Eileen—
The prettiest girl I've ever seen.

* * *

Tale of Two Eggs.

"They may talk about the Japanese being imitative," said a mining man from British Columbia, "but I don't think they have anything on the Chinese in that regard.

"A couple of months ago we got a new China boy—as we call 'em out in the West—as a helper around the kitchen at our house in the mining camp where I'm now operating. My wife thought she saw indications that the new boy might develop into a cook, so she took him in hand and gave him some culinary lessons. In particular, she taught him how to make a cake of which we are fond. He learned the trick in one lesson and has since been making the cake in first-class style right along.

"A fortnight ago my wife happened to be in the kitchen when the Chinaman was preparing the ingredients for this cake. The cook took four live eggs. The China boy opened two and dropped them in a bowl. Then he opened one and threw it away. He opened two and threw it away. He opened two more and dropped them in the bowl. Then he opened another and threw it away. Then he opened another and dropped it in the bowl.

"What did you throw those eggs away for—were they bad?" asked my wife.

"I do alle same like you,' was the reply.

"Inquiry developed the fact that on the day my wife gave the boy his lesson in cake making she had thrown them two bad eggs and had thrown them away. Ever since, each time the boy made the cake, he had thrown two eggs away, regardless of their condition, and in the same order my wife had done. He was simply imitating what she had done and supposed that to be part of the recipe. I don't believe the imitative faculty of the Japs is any stronger than that, do you?"

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THE FAIRY CORNER

WHAT MAY HAPPEN.

A dear little boy
Doubled up o'er a book,
A Jack—not a Jack-knife—
Only just look!

"Sit straighter, my son,"
His papa often said.
But bent like a reed
Wind-bruised, he read.

There came a cold snap:
Tea froze in the urn;
But this dear little chap—
He was reading Jules Verne—

Still sailed to the moon
In his chair crumpled up,
While the mercury crawled
Way down in its cup.

The supper-bell rang.
But poor little Jack
For once was behind—
Because of his back.

The doctor who came
And of his woe tried,
Said it was a bad case
Of chilled double-twist.

And gave my poor Jack
A terrible pill,
That was almost as big
As his terrible bill.

For the money papa
To that doctor did pay
Would have bought Jack a sled;
Yes, bought him a sleigh.

And all to no good;
For Jack, since that sup,
But sideways could grow—
He never grew up.

And though he has "told"
Ten years in a bank,
He's still but a "teller"
Of moderate rank.

For a higher position
He is competent quite—
But then a cashier
Must be ever upright.

The moral is this:
If you want to be great,
Don't stoop when you sit,
But always sit straight.
—Charles Henry Webb.

BOBBINS' CALL.

"I brought somebody to see you," announced the small neighbor as the grown-up neighbor opened the back door. The small neighbor carefully guided a very fat little boy with a great many stuffy clothes on across the threshold. Then he stood, grinning, just inside the door.

"What a cunning little somebody!" exclaimed the grown-up neighbor, as she stooped and kissed one of the small boy's bright red cheeks. "Come into the living-room and sit down a while."

"Well, you know we can't stay very long," said the small neighbor when the two visitors had clambered up into two chairs. "We ran away, you know."

The grown-up neighbor opened her eyes wide. "Well!" she ejaculated; "that wasn't a very nice thing to do, was it?"

"It was nicer than not doing it," said the small neighbor with decision. She shook her shoulders and looked contemptuously and added: "Anyway, it was only just Frank we ran away from. You see," she went on after a moment, "Frank is Robbins' brother. This is Bobbins, you know. Frank is six or nine years older than Bobbins, and he's a very bad boy."

"That's a pity," commented the grown-up neighbor. "But I suppose Bobbins is a good boy."

"Oh, yes, he's good enough," agreed the small neighbor. "He's good enough now, but of course he won't be good at all when he gets as old as Frank."

"Maybe he'll keep right on being good," ventured the grown-up neighbor optimistically.

The small neighbor looked at her with pity in her eyes. "But he's a boy," she explained, "and boys aren't ever good except when they're quite little."

"We ran away," she continued, "because Frank said that if we didn't begin to stop acting the way we were he'd 'nitiate us right that very minute."

"My!" exclaimed the grown-up neighbor, "I don't wonder you ran away. What did you do that made him threaten such a terrible thing?"

"Oh, we didn't really do anything," said the small neighbor easily. "We just put some mud in Frank's hat. What he threatened wasn't so very terrible, because my mother wouldn't really let him do it. But we just decided that we'd come away for a while and we were coming anyway, because I wanted you to see Bobbins. I like him, don't you? I think he's cute."

"He certainly is as cute as he can be," agreed the grown-up neighbor, while the object of their conversation stared, Buddha-like, at nothing. "He's quite little, too. I don't believe he's much more than half as big as you are."

The small neighbor regarded her charge critically. "He's quite small up and down," she agreed, "but he's pretty big around, don't you think?"

"Well, yes; I suppose he is. Who is he?"

"My mother says he's my cousin," said the small neighbor, rather doubtfully, "but I don't see how he can be when I never saw him until day before yesterday. His mother's name is Aunt Molly, and they're going to stay at our house maybe two weeks and then their daddy's coming to take them home."

She hopped lightly down from her chair. "I guess we'll have to be going," she said. "And see, Lucy doll know where we are and maybe they'll be wondering about it. Come on, Bobbins."

Bobbins rolled over on his fat little stomach and wriggled down from his chair. His masterful girl cousin took him by the hand and trotted him toward the door. There she paused.

"You know," she said, looking up into the grown-up neighbor's face with wide, innocent eyes, "Bobbins didn't want to come the least bit in the world, so I had to tell him over on the road what little peppermint candies in your house and once, or maybe three times, you gave me some. Of course," she went on with a troubled look, "mother said I was never to ask you for candy, but she said if you asked me to be sure and I could take it. It wouldn't be polite not to, would it?"

"It would be the height of ill-breeding," gurgled the grown-up neighbor as she hastily departed to do her duty as a hostess.

"Good-by, little people," she called after them a moment later, according to her individual methods of progression, jumped and thumped down the steps.

Chip's Trick.

In a snug bit of a home, under a gray old stump that stood at the foot of a thickly wooded hill, lived, with his father and mother, frisky little Chip.

Chip and the other young squirrels in the neighborhood were fond of having a race over the stumps and rocks, up the trees, from limb to limb and branch to branch, until they were out in the sunny treetops. Then they would stop to rest, eat nuts and chatter about their frolic.

One afternoon, when Chip reached home after one of these flyaway trips, he found his father greatly disturbed because his father, who had gone out in the morning for a short time, had not returned.

"Don't worry," chirped Chip. "I'll find him," and off he went.

He searched, he said, too, for the thought that his father was really gone made no impression in his fuzzy little head. A dusk he came back subdued and alone, yet half expecting to find his father there. One squirrel at his mother showed Chip that he must provide for her; so the next day he began.

Long he had to search for food gathered the nuts near by were gone; then he had to take longer journeys from home. Then far away on the side of the hill one day and discovered a great white house and across the road from it a small, neat, tidied barn.

Chip sat up just where he was when he caught sight of the coveted treasure, and then with a skip he sped to the cornerib and was busily stowing the grain in his side pockets when he was pounced on by a cat furry, lifted off his feet and carried to the big white house.

There he was dropped at the feet of a smaller furry that seized him in a twinkling and carried him into a large yard. Taking a hasty glance at his surroundings, Chip discovered that he could readily make his escape by way of a tree that stood near if he could manage to get out of that creature's mouth. He wriggled to get himself out of the kitten's grasp, whereupon puss dropped him and cuffed his ears. Chip sprang for the tree, but the kitten sprang for him and caught him, too. The foolish puss did not see what he was trying to do, however, and so did not think it worth while to take him farther from the tree.

"Only one more chance like that," thought the squirrel, twitching his whiskers, "and I'll show you a trick."

The kitten dropped him again; away went Chip up the tree, the surprised and unthinking puss following with her stretched out nose close at the end of Chip's tail. Quickly he led her out on a small branch; out, out, beyond her weight; then, as the cat fell down, Chip sprang up, landed in another tree, and reached the top soon enough to see the outmaneuvered cat on the ground just where she had struck, her tail switching and her eyes fixed in a comically bewildered stare on the swaying branch where their ways had, to her, so unexpectedly parted.

SHOPPING FOR A SLEEP.

Weary were my hands, very tired were my feet,
As I once went a shopping through
Sleepy Town Street.
But every shop I saw, no matter where
I'd peep,
I couldn't buy a remnant of a good, sound sleep.

So I bought a nod and a sleepy little yawn,
Then I stretched, and stretched them till very nearly morn.
I bought a yard of poppies, one very loud snore,
And a bright little moonbeam I found on the floor.

Then I took this bundle and placed it on my bed,
And putting on my nightcap I laid down my head.
And while a little cricket was singing Bopeep,
I sewed them all together, and made a good sleep.
—G. Searing Smith.

Tot Wit.

Small Elsie was standing at the window when it began to hail.

"Oh, come and look, mamma," she exclaimed, "it's waining pills!"

Visitor—"Do you help your mother with the housework, Stella?"

Stella (aged 5)—"Yes, ma'am; I help mostly by keeping out of her way."

Small Eloise—"I know a man who doesn't have to pray for his daily bread."

Mamma—"How do you know that, dear?"

Small Eloise—"'Cause he's a baker and makes his own."

"Now, Albert," said the Sunday school teacher, "can you tell me who Moses was?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied the little fellow. "He was the only man who ever broke all the Ten Commandments at once."

Miss Agnes.

A baby sister lately came to their household. The children, hearing that the baby was to be called after a friend of the family, whom they had always heard addressed as Miss Agnes, gave the title to the baby.

"What is the name of your baby sister?" asked a lady on the street car.

"Her name is Miss Agnes," said Jack, gravely.

"And how old is she?" the lady went on.

"Oh, she isn't any old; she is all new. Don't you know about babies?"

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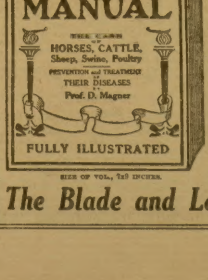

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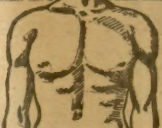

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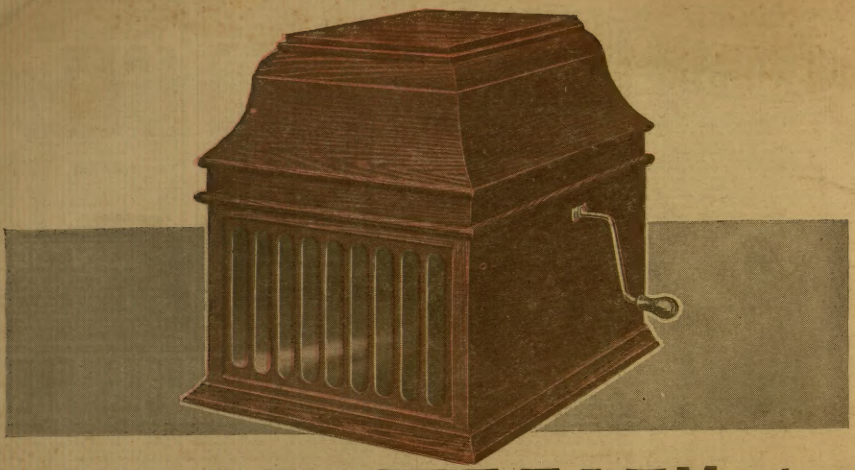

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